

NIETZSCHE AND
MODERN CONSCIOUSNESS

COUNTRIES OF THE MIND

LITERARY ESSAYS

J. MIDDLETON MURRY

DEMY 8vo. 10s. 6d. net

FIRST ESSAYS ON LITERATURE

EDWARD SHANKS

DEMY 8vo. 10s. 6d. net

MR. LLOYD GEORGE

E. T. RAYMOND

DEMY 8vo. 15s. net

TAKEN FROM LIFE

J. D. BERESFORD AND E. O. HOPPE

10s. 6d.

NIETZSCHE

AND

MODERN CONSCIOUSNESS

A PSYCHO-CRITICAL STUDY

by

JANKO LAVRIN

Author of 'Dostoevsky and his Creation,'
'Ibsen and his Creation,' etc.

COLLINS SON'S
LIBRARY
NEW YORK



LONDON: 48 PALL MALL

W. COLLINS SONS & CO. LTD.

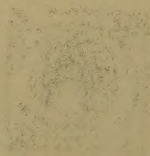
GLASGOW MELBOURNE AUCKLAND

92
N558 e

72912

Copyright 1922.

MADE IN U.S.A.
VIA RAIL
WYOMING



LONDON AND GLASGOW : W. COLLINS SONS AND CO. LTD.

To
H. ROOTHAM

NOTE

THIS book may be considered a companion volume to my previous psycho-critical studies on Dostoevsky and Ibsen.¹ Its object is not so much a fresh attempt to force Nietzsche's philosophy into a scheme or 'system,' as to investigate certain psychological channels between Nietzsche's personality and his philosophy. I have, therefore, limited myself mainly to those aspects of Nietzsche's thought which provide the clue to his inner drama and reveal its connection with the spiritual crisis of modern humanity.

The quotations from Nietzsche's works are mostly taken from *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, edited by Dr Oscar Levy (T. N. Foulis). For quotations from his letters I am largely indebted to Mr Anthony M. Ludovici's translation of *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, edited by Dr Oscar Levy (Heinemann). A few passages from his letters and posthumous aphorisms have been translated by myself.

J. L.

¹ *Dostoevsky and His Creation*, and *Ibsen and His Creation* (Collins).

CONTENTS

CHAP		PAGE
I.	NIETZSCHE AND NIETZSCHEANS	I
II.	CREATIVE MORBIDNESS	15
III.	THE UPROOTED	31
IV.	THE 'ARTIFICE OF SELF-PRESERVATION'	53
V.	SELF-INQUISITION	73
VI.	THE GENESIS OF SUPERMAN	93
VII.	NIETZSCHE AND RELIGION	115
VIII.	THE TWILIGHT OF GOD	133
IX.	'WE IMMORALISTS'	155
X.	NIETZSCHE CÆSAR	167
XI.	INDIVIDUALISM VERSUS EGOTISM	181
XII.	ZARATHUSTRA'S IMPASSE	195
XIII.	THE SUPREME TEST	211

CHAPTER I
NIETZSCHE AND NIETZSCHEANS

I

NIETZSCHE AND NIETZSCHEANS

I

It is a commonplace that there are no disconnected and isolated phenomena either in life or culture. Everything that happens has its manifest or hidden roots in a long chain of other circumstances. The more striking and outstanding a single feature in the domain of art or of thought, for instance, the more reasons we have to study it in close connection with the soil and environment in which it has grown. How could one possibly explain a man like Rousseau without reconstructing first the moral and the mental atmosphere of his epoch? Or Schopenhauer? Or Wagner? Or Zola? Or—to take one of the most conspicuous examples of our time—how could one deal adequately with a man like Nietzsche apart from the general spirit of his age?

There still are cultured and serious-minded people who either ignore Nietzsche, or regard

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

him as an eccentric 'case,' that is, as a madman, who by some regrettable mistake was allowed to publish a number of philosophic books. However, the complexity and significance of Nietzsche as a whole are too evident for such summary solutions. And in truth, face to face with the overwhelming sway of his works during the past two generations, one is forced to assume that, together with certain 'eccentric' elements, they contain others which appeal to the modern man in a greater degree than the works of thinkers perhaps healthier and more balanced. Nor must it be forgotten that however morbid and destructive some of the qualities of his writings, they found all over Europe a soil ready prepared. Much of his philosophy existed 'in the air' even before he gave it that provocative expression which was finally responsible for his unheard-of vogue—a vogue owing to which, in a few years, both the real and the popularised Nietzscheanism permeated all modern culture to such an extent that in whatever direction we go: in art, philosophy, psychology, or religion, we shall almost certainly find some traces of Nietzsche.

This sensational influence of a single man on the current thought of Europe, on modern art, modern literature, and partly even on

Nietzsche and Nietzscheans

modern politics, presents a phenomenon which is interesting, above all, because the sudden spread of Nietzsche's reputation was largely due to detached single aspects of his writings rather than to a really synthetic comprehension of his work and personality.

To many he came as a surprising discovery, because his philosophy is not a mummified system of 'objective' concepts, but something alive and intimate: the history of a personal Golgotha up to the very moment of self-crucifixion. It is a history as disjointed, contradictory, passionate, exultant and morbid as life itself; and the philosophy it embodies is chiefly of that kind of which Pascal says: *Se moquer de la philosophie, c'est vraiment philosopher.*

Another secret of Nietzsche's fascination was the consummate artistry of much that he wrote. It is true that now and then one tires of his endless variations upon single themes. In spite of his wit and irony we occasionally miss in him—especially in his earlier works—that sense of spiritual humour which prohibits any indulgence in mental bombast and pathos. Unconsciously, he shows a certain German tendency to overwhelm his readers by the 'colossal,' often seeming more anxious to impose himself upon them than to convince them.

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

His aggressiveness is sometimes disconcertingly cheap, not to say brutal; and in spite of his intellectual refinement, his literary manners are not always of the best. However, all these defects are more than counterbalanced by the suppleness of his mind, the boldness and depth of his psychological analysis, the originality of his metaphors, and the sparkling maliciousness of his expression. It is the happy combination of a delicate feminine sensitiveness, with a rather harsh masculinity of style and form that lends to his books an intriguing charm, often making his style even more convincing than his ideas. In addition, Nietzsche's sentences vibrate, as a rule, with an absolutely untranslatable Dionysian magic, under the spell of which even such a clumsy instrument as the German language sings and dances as if it were the speech of Zarathustra's Happy Isles.

Nietzsche's temperament is in fact so musical that he permeates most of his passages with melody and rhythm. There is no strict line between Nietzsche the poet and Nietzsche the thinker—a characteristic that prevents his being either a mere artist or a mere thinker; but, for this very reason, his works are equally appealing to both thinkers and artists. Apart from that, he appeared with his teaching of

Nietzsche and Nietzscheans

new values, at a time of utter cultural, moral and intellectual confusion, denouncing with a divine ruthlessness all the foundations of modern civilisation and modern man. In an age of general weakness he came to many like a refreshing wind from a more vigorous climate, extolling the 'will to power' and the possibility of a new heroic existence. And it is here that we approach his real significance.

II

When we consider Nietzsche as a whole, we see at once that he is a typical figure of a transitional period of human history and human spirit. On the one hand, a mentality such as his could have been reared only in a violently capitalistic atmosphere; and on the other, there is no modern thinker who would have waged such bitter war against those very elements which are inseparable from the capitalistic nineteenth century with its depersonalising tendencies. For those in particular who are conscious of the great crisis through which mankind is now passing, Nietzsche's personality may throw a light on many problematic aspects of our age—an age which

is rich in contrasts and poor in everything else.

This chaos of contrasts finds its expression precisely in the advanced modern individual who, as a rule, may be called a *mêlée* of personalities rather than a personality in the real sense of the word. Nietzsche himself is extremely contemporary in this respect. At the first glance he may even appear only a grotesque conglomeration of various antithetic elements: a resolute anti-intellectualist and a rationalist; a disguised mystic and a cold positivist; a Dionysian super-romanticist reminding one of the German 'Storm and Stress,' and at the same time a devotee of Apollo, the god of harmony and measure; a restless iconoclast continuously experimenting with life, with ideas, with himself; and, together with this, an overtired modern soul yearning for harmony and reconciliation with himself. The souls of Luther and Voltaire, of Goethe and Baudelaire, of Bismarck and Chopin, seem to have met in this man, and being unable to blend, were doomed to strive against one another. In this struggle he often had to 'cast his skin,' *i.e.*, to transfer the centre of gravity from one part of his Protean personality upon another. Hence his evasive ambiguity; his many, too many, masks.

Nietzsche and Nietzscheans

Owing to this complexity, Nietzsche is perhaps more liable to be misunderstood than any other philosopher. A great deal of his early fame was due even to direct misunderstandings and misinterpretations of his writings. Thus, by some ironical fate, he was zealously adopted, at the outset, as the mouthpiece of superficial decadents and amateurish *raffinés* who acclaimed Zarathustra's gospel either as a new mental drug, or as the means for a new intellectual pose. It was followers of this stamp who readjusted Nietzsche's over-moral doctrine to their own immoral instincts and propensities to such an extent as to make Nietzsche almost a byword for immoralism. Others refashioned his 'will to power' in such a manner as to justify to themselves their aggressive appetites, private, political or social;¹ while many so-called free-thinkers welcomed Nietzsche the atheist, confusing, in their simplicity, Nietzsche's Luciferic defiance with the atheism of a penny pamphlet.

Unfortunately, it is just these philandering

¹ Some official German imperialists proclaimed the bitter Anti-German, Nietzsche, almost as their patron saint, making him nominally a participator in the ideology of that grabbing nationalism which was one of the causes of the European War. This view seems to be still strong in England, in spite of such conscientious exponents of Nietzscheanism as Oscar Levy, Anthony Ludovici, and A. R. Orage.

Nietzscheans who created the so-called popular Nietzscheanism in their own image. It is largely they who were responsible for Nietzsche as a fashion. But, like all fashions, Nietzsche had his 'season,' to which has naturally succeeded a calmer and more critical attitude. And only such an attitude can gradually do full justice to Nietzsche and his philosophy.

III

It may easily be proved, given a certain amount of pedantry, that all single ideological aspects of Nietzscheanism existed, in some form or other, before Nietzsche, even long before him. We may trace them from Heraclitus to Schopenhauer; from the French moral psychologists, especially La Rochefoucauld, to Goethe, Kleist, Stendhal, Stirner, Gobineau, Guyau, and also Dostoevsky, in whose works the main dilemma of Nietzsche is treated with hardly less force than by Nietzsche himself.¹ And yet, all these inherited ideas Nietzsche filled with a new temperament, with a new

¹ Those who are interested in Nietzscheanism before Nietzsche will find some very illuminating data in Prof. Charles Andler's book, *Les Précurseurs de Nietzsche*, Paris (Ed. Bossard).

Nietzsche and Nietzscheans

dynamic content. He succeeded in blending them not so much into a new philosophy as into a new personality, imbued with 'the evil conscience' of the age. For, according to him, 'the philosopher must be the evil conscience of his age—but to this end he must be possessed of its best knowledge.'

So the study of Nietzsche must be undertaken from the angle of all our 'modernity.' By a strange paradox, it is often Nietzsche's virulent and passionate subjectivism that gives to his writings an objective significance and value, making of him a representative, a symbolic figure, which one cannot ignore in dealing with the problems of the modern Individual in general. His personal dilemma is, as it were, a condensed and exaggerated example of those very conflicts through which the advanced contemporary consciousness is passing, or will have to pass.

Hence, Nietzsche's philosophy, if wisely approached, may well serve as an Ariadne-thread to the labyrinths of the modern Soul. The more so because he drew all his philosophy direct from life, being organically incapable of separating his ideas from his inmost experience. His *Erkennen* (knowledge) was always the result of his own *Erleben* (living experience). He

himself asserts in *The Joyful Wisdom* that 'it makes the most material difference whether a thinker is personally related to his problems, having his fate, his need, his highest happiness therein; or impersonally, being only able to grasp them with the tentacles of cold, prying thinking. In the latter case nothing results therefrom—so much can be promised.' Or even more radically: 'We philosophers are not at liberty to separate soul and body, as the people separate them; and we are still less at liberty to separate soul and spirit. We are not thinking frogs, we are not objectifying and registering apparatuses with cold entrails—our thoughts must be continually born to us out of our pain, and we must, motherlike, share with them all that we have in us of blood, heart, ardour, joy, passion, pang, conscience, fate and fatality. Life—that means for us to transform constantly into light and flame all that we are, and all that we meet with; we *cannot* possibly do otherwise.'

Assuming that a philosophy which has been lived, and tried by suffering, is likely to be more vital—with all its incoherence and contradictions—than a system, however smooth and logical, which has been merely 'thought' (in a comfortable arm-chair), we shall hardly deny that

Nietzsche and Nietzscheans

Nietzsche has something to say. So on the very threshold of our study we are confronted with the question as to the connection between his philosophy and his suffering, his morbidness, even his subsequent insanity.

CHAPTER II

CREATIVE MORBIDNESS

II

CREATIVE MORBIDNESS

I

ONE of the subtlest problems of the psychology of artistic and literary creation is the relationship between 'insanity' and genius; or—more modestly—between disease and mental productiveness, between pathologic morbidity and art.

In European Art and Literature we find instances of highly sane geniuses (Milton and Goethe); but the number of those who were diseased or even 'somewhat mad' seems to be also considerable. This is especially the case in the nervous nineteenth and twentieth centuries, whose turmoil of practical activities has resulted in the complete destruction of the internal rhythm of life, reducing it simply to a noisy and maddening whirl. The fatal consequence of this whirl is that it strains and ruins precisely the most sensitive nerves, while the growing discrepancy between the external and the inner

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

tempos of our life completes our loss of balance. So much so that nowadays we listen with a sceptical smile to all talk about the possibility of an inner harmony. We no longer believe even in 'normality' in the good old sense of this word: with the general conditions of our life utterly abnormal, we can hardly expect to find a healthy normality in individuals who grow under such conditions, and are, so to speak, their products. There even arises the question as to whether a serene artist like Goethe was originally 'normal,' or whether he only succeeded in balancing his inward chaos (by means of his will and self-discipline) to such an extent as to present to onlookers the peace and harmony of a Greek statue. His very artistic creation may have been a kind of medicine and one of the means of retaining that balance which prevented him from inner disintegration. Be it as it may, we have only to look a little into the history of Art and Literature during the last hundred years to discover that many of their important representatives were diseased individuals, somewhere near the verge of abnormality or even of a complete physical degeneracy. The names of Edgar Poe, Leopardi, Baudelaire, Verlaine, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Hoelderlin, de-Nerval, van-Gogh, and Gauguin

Creative Morbidity

are sufficient to confirm the above statement.

This curious phenomenon cannot be mere coincidence. The very abundance of pathologic talents shows that there must be some connection between Art and morbidity. In how far is the former conditioned by the latter? Or is it the reverse? Are disease and pathology among the causes of Art? Or are they only a kind of undesirable but inevitable by-product? Or a reaction? Or a stimulus? Or perhaps all together? Furthermore, if the creative activities are, directly or indirectly, connected with morbidity, is then the latter a disease of growth or of decay? Or can it be perhaps growth and decay at one and the same time—an assumption which would make the 'behind-the-scenes' of artistic creation even more alluring for those interested in the psychology of Art?

II

It would be useless to seek a proper logical formula for the process of artistic creation. All creative impulses belong to the realm of the irrational processes, and these can only be crippled and distorted by abstract 'rational'

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

definitions and generalisations. Hence no more than a few hints and observations can be given—observations which in any case are bound to be incomplete for the lack of a proper terminology.

One of such vague suppositions is that true artistic inspiration is the irruption of certain subliminal elements into our consciousness. The richer and the more vital our unconscious self, the more likely it is that our consciousness will be periodically flooded by these sudden uprushes which usually destroy the balance between our conscious and unconscious areas—unless we disburden ourselves from the subliminal surplus by means of artistic creation. The latter thus becomes (in its deepest forms) a kind of restorative, of sublimation, and consequently a means for mental, and sometimes even physical, self-preservation. In cases where one's consciousness is overwhelmed by too strong subliminal currents one may even become obsessed, as it were, in a negative or a positive direction, according to the quality of the channels connecting the two areas. A refined organism susceptible of 'super-conscious' currents may experience the creative ecstasy of a genius where coarser organisms would be subject but to fits of epilepsy or of madness.

Creative Morbidity

Very often these two currents—the one coming from the super-conscious, the other from the sub-conscious—seem to be so curiously mingled in the same individual that it is impossible to draw a strict line between them. This may become clearer if we assume that the inner growth of man is but a gradual translation of his sub-conscious into his super-conscious self, and that, in such an alchemical flux there cannot exist any walls between various, sometimes most contradictory, elements. It may also happen that the stirring of the lower, physiological elements induces at the same time a spasmodic activity of the super-conscious currents. This explains why indulgence in sex, in alcohol, and in drugs such as opium and hashish may rouse in certain people a sort of pseudo-creative ecstasy whose artistic result usually shows, even in real talents, only a strained and smoky kind of magic (for instance, the art of Edgar Poe, with its leaden, nightmare-like atmosphere; or that of Charles Baudelaire, in whose poems one often feels the air of a *morgue*.) A complete analogy to this theory of psychological discharge may be found even in our everyday nervousness and lack of balance. Owing to modern education and the artificiality of our social life, there are many elements and impulses which a

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

civilised individual must suppress rather than transmute or sublimate. They are gradually stored in the reservoir of his Unconscious. Should this burden become too great it naturally must demand liberation, and if an outlet be not found in time the pressure may increase to such an extent as to explode in some form or other of hysteria, or even of insanity.

Sport, travel, love, social and other activities may be successful psychological counter-measures in certain cases and for certain people. However, the most interesting and at the same time also the rarest restorative is that by which one discharges the accumulated inner pressure through an act of artistic creation.

Viewed from this standpoint, a large part of Art and Literature might be the result of latent or declared 'morbidness.' In those cases where a creative personality is threatened by an exceptionally dangerous morbidness of mind and body, equally strong tonics must be devised in order to counteract it; and in so far as these counter-measures are undertaken on the plane of artistic or philosophic activities they can manifest two widely divergent directions. If the 'patient' is devoid of vitality, too weak and too tired for an open struggle with his fate, he usually tries to find a shelter of narcotic illusions

Creative Morbidity

and exaltations in which to forget himself. So-called romantic art with its 'mystic,' exotic and Nirvanic departments may provide now and then a comfortable and seductive refuge. But exactly the opposite course is taken by those defiant creators who are (or even more in those who *wish* to be) brave enough to meet their fate in the open. Their art or philosophy becomes their chief weapon in this fight, by the influence of which they usually become more and more carried away, trying to exercise all their self-discipline, to summon all their subtlety, their will, their endurance, in order to devise and practise those methods which are necessary for their self-preservation, or even for a gradual attainment of physical and mental health. In proportion as their morbidity increases they too must increase their cunning, their daring and their pride of struggle; they must know how to become even intoxicated by this pride, as well as by the dimensions of their own daring. In this way their very illness may become their main stimulus to life.

Those who understand the significance and the possible results of such a struggle have an important clue to the philosophy of Nietzsche.

III

Nietzsche himself does not make any secret of the relation his philosophy bears to his 'morbidness.' He even emphasises the great significance of disease for any one who is strong enough to overcome it.

'Health and morbidness: let us be careful!' he warns us in *The Will to Power*. 'The standard is the bloom of body, the agility, courage, and cheerfulness of the mind—but also, of course, how much *morbidness a man can bear and overcome*—and convert into health. That which would send more delicate natures to the dogs, belongs to the stimulating means of *great health*.'

He partly formulates even his own personal dilemma when he says: 'It is only a question of power: to have all the morbid traits of the century, but to balance them by means of overflowing, plastic and rejuvenating power. The *strong man*.'

Suffering and disease may at the same time be among the most efficient means of knowledge in so far as they develop and sharpen our susceptibility, and stir up those mental currents which in a normal and entirely

Creative Morbidity

healthy individual usually remain untouched. Every phase of a dangerous illness may thus become a new revelation, requiring a new attitude towards reality and life.

‘The state of sick men who have suffered long and terribly from the torture inflicted upon them by their illness, and whose reason has nevertheless not been in any way affected, is not without a certain amount of value in our search for knowledge—quite apart from the intellectual benefits which follow upon every profound solitude and every sudden and justified liberation from duties and habits. The man who suffers severely looks forth with terrible calmness from his state of suffering upon outside things: all those little lying enchantments, by which things are usually surrounded when seen through the eye of a healthy person, have vanished from the sufferer; his own life even lies before him, stripped of all bloom and colour. If by chance it has happened that up to then he has lived in some kind of dangerous fantasy, this extreme disenchantment through pain is the means, and possibly the only means, of extricating him from it.’

The above passage ‘on the knowledge of the sufferer’ in *The Dawn of Day* may well be supplemented by another on the same

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

subject from the Preface to *The Joyful Wisdom*.

‘As regards sickness,’ he reasons, ‘should we not be almost tempted to ask whether we could in general dispense with it? It is great pain only which is the ultimate emancipator of the spirit. . . . It is great pain only, the long, slow pain which takes time, by which we are burned, as it were, with green wood, that compels us philosophers to descend into our ultimate depths, and divest ourselves of all trust, all good-nature, veiling gentleness and averageness, wherein we have perhaps formerly installed our humanity. I doubt whether such pain improves us; but I know that it deepens us. Be it that we learn to confront it with our pride, our scorn, our strength of will, doing like the Indian who, however sorely tortured, revenges himself on his tormentor with his bitter tongue; be it that we withdraw from the pain into the oriental nothingness—it is called Nirvana—into mute, benumbed, deaf, self-surrender, self-forgetfulness, and self-effacement: one emerges from such long, dangerous exercises in self-mastery as another being, with several additional notes of interrogation, and above all, with the *will* to question more than ever, more profoundly, more strictly, more sternly, more

Creative Morbidity

wickedly, more quietly than has ever been questioned hitherto. . . . One comes back out of such abysses, out of such severe sickness, and out of the sickness of strong suspicion—*new-born*, with the skin cast; more sensitive, more wicked, with a finer taste for joy, with a more delicate tongue for all good things, with a merrier disposition, with a second and more dangerous innocence in joy; more childish at the same time, and a hundred times more refined than before.'

And does he not say in the same work, concerning the whole of Europe, that she 'is an invalid who owes her best thanks to her incurability and the eternal transformations of her sufferings? These constant new situations, these equally constant new dangers, pains and make-shifts, have at last generated an intellectual sensitiveness which is almost equal to genius, and is in any case the mother of all genius.'

IV

Applying this same attitude to artistic creation, Nietzsche points out (in *The Will to Power*) that 'it is exceptional states that determine the artist—such states as are intimately related and

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

entwined with morbid symptoms, so that it would be almost impossible to be an artist without being ill.'

But though this is partially true, it is nevertheless essential that the artist or writer should have a sufficient stock of inner energy not only to bear his own 'illness' but even to make it creative. His morbidness usually differs from that of ordinary cranks and eccentrics—apart from talent—in so far as it is conditioned by a surplus rather than by a lack of inner vitality. And so 'an overflow of spunk and energy may quite as well lead to symptoms of partial constraint, sense hallucinations, peripheral sensitiveness, as a poor vitality does—the stimuli are differently determined, the effect is the same. . . . What is not the same is above all the ultimate result; the extreme torpidity of all morbid natures, after their nervous eccentricities, has nothing in common with the state of the artist, who need in no wise repent his best moments. . . . He is rich enough for it all : he can squander without becoming poor.'

Besides, is not Nietzsche's original conception of what he calls Dionysian Art based on precisely these premises? The ecstatic art of music, as distinct from the plastic (Apollinic) art whose origin is in dream and contemplation? According

Creative Morbidity

to Nietzsche, the ecstatic moment when the individual consciousness bursts its limits, dissolving, as it were, in the mysterious World-Will itself, gives one such an overflow of vital force that this Dionysian state might degenerate into collective orgiastic excesses of the Eastern barbarians unless the 'pathologic' Dionysos be tempered and disciplined by Apollo, the God of measure.¹ Being, above all, a eulogist of the Dionysian, *i.e.*, of the dynamic-unconscious and the instinctive, as against the 'Socratic' or rational, Nietzsche himself must have been personally acquainted with this morbidity of overflow. However, these occasional Dionysian states were in him intermixed and interchanged with the morbidity of the opposite, really diseased kind—a fact which only widened the range of his insight and of his psychological experience.

Therefore it would be superfluous to emphasise that Nietzsche owes not only a large amount of his stupendous 'intellectual sensitiveness,' but also the general trend of his writings mainly to his morbidity. This circumstance does not of course imply that his writings must also be morbid or pessimistic. For the very reason

¹ As is known, he interpreted the Greek Tragedy (and even the whole of Greek culture at its best) as a synthesis of Dionysos and Apollo.

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

that they were his only medicine they often breathe a vitality and a joy of life comparable with the depths of despair out of which they had grown as a conscious reaction. Or as Nietzsche himself puts it in *Ecce Homo* : ' Out of my Will to Health and Life I made my philosophy. . . . For this should be thoroughly understood; it was during those years in which my vitality reached its lowest point that I ceased from being a pessimist: the instinct of self-recovery forbade my holding to a philosophy of poverty and desperation.'

However, his philosophy was a double-edged sword: he had to contend not only against his own disease, but also against that of his age. Therefore, an examination of Nietzsche's personal attitude towards the age in which he lived is of great importance.

CHAPTER III
THE UPROOTED

III

THE UPROOTED

I

THE favourite mottoes of our epoch are 'Evolution' and 'Progress.' Both of them sound attractive—at least as long as we do not inquire too insistently into their essence and real significance. For if we ask ourselves towards *what* we are actually evolving and progressing, we shall with difficulty find an answer that goes beyond those accepted common-places whose rôle is to label as innocuous any disturbing problems. A hundred apostles of progress would probably give a hundred different answers. And who could conceive nowadays an ideal of social evolution equally acceptable, say, to a Christian, an anarchist, an atheist, a capitalist, and a labourer?

In short, the extreme social differentiation of modern humanity inevitably produced also an extreme differentiation of mentalities, and consequently of cultural tendencies, in the

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

various social strata. This would not be an evil in itself if there were some general aim or value with a sufficient force to give to all partial and differing tendencies a centripetal direction, converging them round one great purpose. Unfortunately, there exists no aim of this kind: each partial factor of our civilisation tends to revolve haphazard as something self-centred. Instead of a creative gradation of purposes we thus have a more and more destructive anarchy of social and cultural values. Instead of a co-operation of all elements for the sake of an aim which would qualitatively transcend their particular ends, our social organism has become a confused battlefield of those elements, each of which tries to subdue and exploit the whole for the sake of its own private aim. And since there is no great central principle compelling enough to organise all the divergent elements in a mutual co-operation for its sake, then the only alternative that remains is the sway of disorganised quantity as such.

The general substitution of quantity for quality is, indeed, rapidly increasing in all branches of our life. In our days the qualitative value of culture, for instance, has already been replaced by the mere quantitative value of 'general education.' Owing to the divorce of

The Uprooted

the two, the so-called general education is serving purposes quite different from those of real culture. One can go even so far as to say that each so-called social advance in the course of modern European history has resulted in a certain retrogression of culture—in the interests of general education.

The reason is simple. The classes which, after each revolutionary or economic cataclysm come upon the surface of social life, rarely possess strong cultural traditions of their own and therefore try to fill up this gap partly by standardised obligatory education, and partly by copying the traditions and customs of the defeated or decayed upper classes. But as the frenzy of the modern struggle for existence gives them no time, either for a thorough education or even for thorough imitation, the result, as a rule, is a parody on the one hand, and anarchy of taste, of manners and customs on the other. In this way the rising *bourgeoisie* once began to ape the fallen aristocracy which, although deprived of its former content, its fascinating reality, still retained in a certain degree its fascinating exterior. But the worthy *bourgeois-gentilhommes* proved not fine enough to counterfeit even a refined exterior. The great style of life became in their hand a caricature,

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

an apotheosis of snobbery and self-complacent philistinism. The romance and *élan* of life; the capacity for adventure, for pride, for higher honour and for disinterested activities—they all were replaced by cowardly respectability, business-like seriousness, and universal tedium. The so-called social and industrial progress of modern Europe thus went hand in hand with the general vulgarisation of our existence—vulgarisation of manners, of intellect, of taste and character.

Even the remarkable increase of science that has been achieved in the last century hardly helps to raise the general level and style of life. For science itself has become so 'specialised,' so estranged from life as a whole that nowadays it grows at the expense of man. A contemporary scientist is becoming more like a tool than a living being. Further, do we not see that side by side with the enormous scientific progress grows also our modern intellectual flunkeyism? The vaunted emancipation of the human mind from all 'unscientific' ideas of the past ages has brought us into the shallow marsh of popularised half-truths and quasi-scientific prejudices among whose rushes we have so entangled ourselves that a really free spirit seems, in our days of all possible freedoms, almost a myth.

And so in whatever direction we go we notice

The Uprooted

that man has been exchanged into small coin as a sovereign into farthings. He is no longer strong enough either for real good, or for real evil: he has polluted both of them and become only vulgar—vulgar in his sins, and even more vulgar in his virtues. His very docility is but the result of his lukewarm and thin blood, of his moral and mental cowardice, and especially of his inward indifference to everything that does not concern his own petty needs and appetites. There is no struggle for the sake of any great aims or distant visions. We see instead only that miserable scramble for daily bread which degrades the very name of mankind. Hence no wonder that man is valued not by what he is, but by what he possesses; that personality is looked upon as a mere appendage to the banking-account. And as to our daily work, we perform it not as joyful creators, but only as money-makers and self-complacent galley-slaves. All our stupendous industrial production thus grows at the expense of our creation. Humanity was never more productive and at the same time less creative than in our age, in which the general impoverishment and degradation of Life proceed hand in hand with our so-called progress and evolution.

One of the questions which immediately confront us on a contemplation of this state of things refers to the position of those spirits who have still preserved their craving for an elevation of Life and Man. What is in fact the attitude of a real mental *élite* towards an epoch in which they must feel casual, superfluous and 'out of season'—not because of their defects, but because of their best qualities?

Their situation is, in fact, without any real outlet, and often tragic beyond description. They may possess character, vitality, energy, desire to work; and yet it is usually their refinement, their spiritual taste, so to speak, that bars them the way to an active participation in those practical, too practical methods which are invariably connected with a 'success' or 'victory' in our society. Lacking the cunning, as well as the clownish versatility, which is so indispensable for playing a prominent part among the contemporary 'gilded, falsified populace, whose fathers were pickpockets, or carrion crows, or rag-pickers,' they are doomed to loneliness, to inactivity, and not seldom also to starvation. They are helpless owing to their very strength of character which

The Uprooted

forbids them to make compromises with anything they despise. So it happens that our 'progress' systematically tends to eliminate just the noblest type of man, making him superfluous and infecting him with those forms of pessimism, social indifference, vindictiveness, and nostalgia which invariably result from such an involuntary isolation of the individual from the whole. For whenever he tries to participate in the 'living life,' he is driven again and again back into his solitude. Being endowed with the capacity for boundless love, he does not find anything worth loving in an age of titanic vulgarity; therefore his very love usually degenerates into self-assertive spite and scorn.

This kind of social *déraciné* is becoming more numerous than one realises. It is not improbable that the terrorists of the future will come forth from among precisely such aristocrats of character and culture, who will seek to revenge themselves upon the whole of society for their own uprootedness. So far their revenge has usually taken the form of a ruthless denunciation of their age, accompanied by that defiant and protesting self-assertiveness which for many serves as a last illusion of a powerful and intense life. They resort to their very nausea as a remedy, deliberately exaggerating it, until they are disgusted

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

with their own disgust—at which point a new, a pessimistic idealism may take root, often providing for them a kind of shelter and at the same time an apparently active, a creative scope.

It is here that a curious species of modern idealists has its origin: a kind of philosophic knights-errant whose search for idealistic illusions, whether moral or æsthetic, is not the result of their sentimentality and of the short-sightedness of 'beautiful souls,' but a desperate effort to overcome the growing loathing which threatens to crush them. These Don Quixotes create quite consciously not only their Dulcineas, but often also the windmills against which they must break their own ribs, from time to time, in order to compel themselves to take their ideal the more seriously. Such a pessimistic idealism is perhaps one of the last subterfuges of the modern soul, in so far as this has still preserved its longing for an elevation of life and does not surrender to the spirit of the age. And a relentless longing for a life worth living is one of Nietzsche's ruling passions—a passion that gives a tragic pathos to his writings and covers with a noble haze even certain distorted impulses of his complicated mentality. It is this passion that has converted a large portion

The Uprooted

of Nietzsche's philosophy into a continuous effort to overcome his own disgust through that conscious and self-imposed idealism, the genesis of which is well described, for example, in Zarathustra's sermon on the Rabble.

'I asked once, and suffocated almost with my question: What? is the rabble also necessary for life?

'Are poisoned fountains necessary, and stinking fires, and filthy dreams, and maggots in the bread of life?

'Not my hatred, but my loathing gnawed hungrily at my life! Ah, oft-times became I weary of spirit, when I found even the rabble spiritual!

'And on the rulers turned I my back, when I saw what they now call ruling: the traffic and bargain for power—with the rabble!

'Amongst peoples of strange language did I dwell, with stopped ears: so that the language of their trafficking might remain strange unto me, and their bargaining for power.

'And holding my nose, I went morosely through all yesterdays and to-days: verily, badly smell all yesterdays and to-days of the scribbling rabble!

'Like a cripple become deaf, and blind, and dumb—thus have I lived long; that I might

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

not live with the power-rabble, the scribe-rabble, and the pleasure-rabble.

‘Toilsomely did my spirit mount stairs, and cautiously; alms of delight were its refreshment; on the staff did life creep along with the blind one.

‘What has happened unto me? How have I freed myself from loathing? Who hath rejuvenated mine eye? How have I flown to the height where no rabble any longer sits at the wells?

‘Did my loathing itself create for me wings and fountain-divining powers? Verily, to the loftiest height had I to fly, to find again the well of delight!

‘Oh, I have found it, my brethren! Here on the loftiest height bubbleth up for me the well of delight! And there is a life at whose waters none of the rabble drink with me!’

III

This extract brings to light another of the main factors which determined the character of Nietzsche’s creations, namely, his isolation in an industrialised and ‘democratic’ Europe, and

The Uprooted

especially in the industrialised Germany with her swaggering conceit (after the Franco-Prussian war), her vulgar taste and servile state-worship. In such a Europe, Nietzsche could not help dreaming of a world according to his own uncompromising taste—a world 'before which one could bow the knee,' for which it would be worth while to live and struggle. His individualistic and aristocratic propensities were thus only strengthened by his uprootedness, and these, combined with the warlike and romantic disposition of a born reformer, made of his 'ideal world' not a passive rest-house, but a goal according to which he wanted eventually to mould the whole of humanity, the whole of life.

Curiously enough, he adapted to this active tendency even the pessimism of his teacher, Arthur Schopenhauer, whose *World as Will and Representation* (picked up by him from a book-stall at Leipzig in 1865) had a decisive influence upon his mental development. His first book, *The Birth of Tragedy*, was inspired by Schopenhauer's nihilistic philosophy, which sees Pain at the basis of all Life, and therefore prefers (in theory, at any rate) non-existence to existence. However, the more bitterly Nietzsche acknowledged the horror and misery of Life, the

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

more he endeavoured to cope with Schopenhauer's nihilism by a self-imposed æsthetic illusion, *i.e.*, by interpreting the world not as a moral, but as an æsthetic phenomenon—as a grandiose 'self-generating work of art.'

Much later (in *The Will to Power*) Nietzsche reminds us apropos his *Birth of Tragedy* that 'the conception of the world which lies in the background of this book, is extraordinarily gloomy and unpleasant: among all the types of pessimism which have ever been known hitherto, none seems to have attained to this degree of malice. The contrast of a true and of an apparent world is entirely absent here: there is but one world, and it is false, cruel, contradictory, seductive, and without sense. . . . A world thus constituted is the true world. We are in need of lies in order to rise superior to this reality, to this truth—that is to say, in order to live. . . . That lies should be necessary to life is part and parcel of the terrible and questionable character of existence. Metaphysics, morality, religion, science—in this book, all these things are regarded merely as different forms of falsehood: by means of them we are led to believe in life. "Life must inspire confidence": the task which this imposes upon us is enormous. In order to solve this problem man must be a liar in his

The Uprooted

heart, but he must above all else be an artist. And he is that. Metaphysics, religion, morality, science—all these things are but the offshoot of his will to art, to falsehood, to a flight from “truth,” to a denial of “truth.” This ability, this artistic capacity *par excellence* of man—thanks to which he overcomes reality with lies—is a quality which he has in common with all other forms of existence. He himself is indeed a piece of reality, of truth, of nature: how could he help being also a piece of genius in prevarication!’

Proclaiming art as more divine than ‘truth,’ Nietzsche adds that no one would with greater readiness utter a radical denial of life, an actual denial of action even more than a denial of life, than he himself. But while he needs art as a kind of ‘metaphysical comfort,’ the young philosopher does not deny life. He tries, instead, to improve it and make it worth living. His biting attacks upon the ‘Socratic’ (*i.e.*, reasoning and intellectualising) tendencies of our culture are far from showing him in the light of a resigned pessimist. He launched an equally defiant onslaught against the whole of modernity in the *Thoughts out of Season*, in which he manifests both the aggressive courage of a destroyer and the profound longing of a man who destroys

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

only because he wishes to build and to rebuild. It is the innate ambitious Reformer, or Educator, in Nietzsche who does not forget even in the depths of pessimism that 'the whole world is now waiting for the man of *deeds*, who strips the habit of centuries from himself and others, and who sets a better example for posterity to follow,' as he puts it in a letter to Malvida von Meysenbug (in 1873). At his very *début* he requires that philosophy itself ought to create not new systems, but new men, new forms of life. In his early essay, *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, he clearly defines also his own prospective task when he says: 'For my part, the most important question philosophy has to decide seems to be, how far things have acquired an unalterable stamp and form, and, once this question has been answered, I think it the duty of philosophy unhesitatingly and courageously to proceed with the task of *improving that part of the world which has been recognised as still susceptible to change.*' And as to the idea which later on played such an important part in his philosophy, the idea of a breed of superior men, it is repeatedly forecast in those early studies. He emphasises in *The Use and Abuse of History* that the aim of mankind can lie only in its high examples, exclaiming in the rather high-flown language of his first period:

The Uprooted

"One giant calls to the other across the waste spaces of time, and the high spirit-talk goes on undisturbed by the wanton noisy dwarfs who creep among them. The task of history is to be mediator between these, and even to give the motive and power to produce the great man.'

So the tendency towards the ennobling (*Veredelung*) of the human type and the human race begins already in his early 'Schopenhauerian' phase. It is, so to speak, Schopenhauer's cult of genius made active. Even Nietzsche's profound interest in ancient Greece was fostered to a great extent by the idea of rearing superior individuals. In his unfinished work, *We Philologists* (written in 1874), he acknowledges that he is interested 'only in the relations of a people to the rearing of the individual man, and among the Greeks the conditions were unusually favourable for the development of the individual; not by any means owing to the goodness of the people, but because of the struggle of their evil instincts.—*With the help of favourable means great individuals might be reared who would be both different from and higher than those who heretofore have owed their existence to mere chance. Here we may still be hopeful.*'

This, in its own way romantic and at the same time somewhat eugenic, tendency

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

must doubtless have been strongly influenced by Darwinism. Various modifications of the principle of the survival of the fittest, in particular, permeated the whole of Nietzsche's sociology. And since the survival of the strongest and most successful implies a continuous struggle not only for the sake of their victory, but above all for the development, the maintenance, and the increase of their own strength, the struggle as such soon became of necessity the very basis of Nietzsche's ethics. This struggle was bound to be all the more fierce and uncompromising the more uprooted the fighter felt in the age which he challenged.

'I dream of a combination of men,' says Nietzsche, in the above-mentioned work, 'who shall make no concessions, who shall show no consideration, and who shall be willing to be called "destroyers": they apply the standard of their criticism to everything and sacrifice themselves to truth. The bad and the false shall be brought to light. We will not build prematurely; we do not know, indeed, whether we shall be able to build, or if it would not be better not to build at all. There are lazy pessimists and resigned ones in this world—and it is to their number that we refuse to belong.'

The Uprooted

IV

This is how the young Nietzsche transformed Schopenhauer's resigned pessimism, which denies Will and the World, through his own active temperament, into a pessimism of romantic courage and defiance. However, it would be short-sighted to regard this as real strength: it is a desperate will to strength rather than strength itself. The intoxication with one's theoretical daring and courage may become even a necessary compensation, a mental drug, just for those people who in practice are weak, shy or helpless, and who suffer too much from the consciousness of their own disabilities.

Nietzsche was in practical life one of the most delicate and timid natures. It is noteworthy that even when in love with Lou Salomé, he (as Daniel Halévy relates) was not brave enough to make a personal declaration of love; he begged his friend Paul Rée to speak in his name and withdrew. But the feeling of helplessness in the face of reality and life made him the more determined to overcome himself—if not in practice, at least in theory, wherefore his philosophy gradually took the form of a challenge both to his age

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

and to his own weakness in all its manifestations. In other words, the uprooted philosopher would defy everything within and without himself that the very range of his challenge might convince him of his own strength. It is his very weakness that makes him develop his defiance and his will on a large, even on a metaphysical scale—a trait which may be partly elucidated by the remarkable definition of the Promethean myth which we find in his *Birth of Tragedy*.

‘The tale of Prometheus is an original possession of the entire Aryan family of races,’ he says there, ‘and documentary evidence of their capacity for the profoundly tragic; indeed, it is not improbable that this myth has the same characteristic significance for the Aryan race that the myth of the fall of man has for the Semitic, and that there is a relationship between the two myths like that of brother and sister. The presupposition of the Promethean myth is the transcendent value which a naïve humanity attach to *fire* as the true Palladium of every ascending culture: that man, however, should dispose at will of this fire, and should not receive it only as a gift from heaven, as the igniting lightning of the warming solar flame, appeared to the contemplative primordial men as crime

The Uprooted

and robbery of the divine nature. And thus the first philosophical problem at once causes a painful, irreconcilable antagonism between men and God, and puts, as it were, a mass of rock at the gate of every culture. The best and highest that men can acquire they obtain by a crime, and must now in their turn take upon themselves its consequences, namely, the whole flood of sufferings and sorrows with which the offended celestials *must* visit the nobly aspiring race of man. . . . What distinguishes the Aryan representation is the sublime view of *active sin* as the properly Promethean virtue, which suggests at the same time the ethical basis of pessimistic tragedy as the *justification* of human evil—of human guilt as well as of the suffering incurred thereby.'

This is a characteristic passage of the young Nietzsche. He himself had so strong a 'Promethean' vein in his mentality that throughout the whole of his life we can trace it beneath its many disguises. And he asserts himself most ruthlessly just when he is nearest to the possibility of practical resignation. His theoretical self-affirmation becomes, in these cases, exaggerated and extended to such limits as to be able to cope even with the greatest dangers of a collapse and capitulation before his fate.

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

But in order to follow the process more fully we must examine those new aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy which were the direct result of his struggle for existence itself; for it is at this phase that the proper dilemma of Nietzsche begins.

CHAPTER IV
THE 'ARTIFICE OF SELF-PRESERVATION'

IV

THE 'ARTIFICE OF SELF-PRESERVATION'

I

BESIDES the vindictive uprootedness of a creative idealist who feels himself entirely 'out of season' in the atmosphere of his age, we find three more factors whose interplay may help us in elucidating Nietzsche's main philosophic conclusions and inconsistencies. The first has its source in those tendencies which he inherited from generations of religious ancestors; the second in the deliberate reaction of his will and intellect against some of these tendencies; and the third—perhaps the most important of all—is the grave malady against which he had to contend unceasingly for more than twelve years (roughly from 1876 till his catastrophe on New Year's Day, 1889).

The real cause of the disease which eventually drove Nietzsche into insanity is even now somewhat obscure, despite the attempts of Moebius and others to solve it. The fact that

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

his father, the Roecken Pastor, Karl-Ludwig Nietzsche, died from inflammation of the brain does not give us a real clue, for his mental aberration apparently was not hereditary but only the result of a heavy fall from the stone steps of his house in 1848, *i.e.*, when his son Friedrich was already in his fourth year. But whatever the origin of Nietzsche's illness, it is certain that even during the first years of his professorship at the University of Bâle—a post which he obtained at the early age of twenty-four—the young savant began to suffer from heavy attacks of headache and a gradual weakening of his eyesight. His periodical suffering soon increased to such an extent that he was compelled to resign his post, to begin a continuous vagabondage over Europe in search of places which could provide him some physical alleviation.

‘I have resigned my professorship and am going to the mountains,’ he wrote to his publisher in May, 1879. ‘I am on the verge of desperation and have scarcely any hope left. My sufferings have been too great, too persistent.’ And he signed himself—*A Half-Blind Man*. In the same year he wrote to his friend Peter Gast: ‘Now I am in the middle of life and so “encircled by death” that at any minute it can lay hold of me. From the nature of my suffering I must

The 'Artifice of Self-Preservation'

reckon upon a *sudden* death through convulsions.'

'I am on the verge of despair,' he complains (in Latin) two years later to Professor Overbeck. 'The suffering is crushing my life and my Will. Oh, what months, what a summer I have gone through! I experienced as many physical tortures as there were changes in the sky. . . . Five times I called death to me as the only physician, and I hoped that yesterday would be my last day—but I hoped in vain.' And in a letter to Baron von Seydlitz (written as late as February, 1888) we read again: 'It has not been a "proud silence" that has sealed my lips to every one all this time, but rather the humble silence of a sufferer who was ashamed of betraying the extent of his pain. When an animal is ill it crawls into its cave—so does *la bête philosophe*. So seldom does a friendly voice come my way. I am alone, absurdly alone, and in my unrelenting subterranean war against all that mankind has hitherto honoured and loved I myself seem unwittingly to have become something of a cave, something concealed that can no longer be found even when it is a definite object of search.'

¹ This letter with its 'cave' and 'subterranean war' reminds one of Dostoevsky's vigorous work, *Letters from the Underworld* (*Zapiski iz podpolya*.) It is interesting that only

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

It was his malady that drove Nietzsche into the 'subterranean cave,' isolating him more completely than ever from the rest of the world. And while he had at every moment to face the threats of Death, there were for him in the contest no other weapons than his will and his philosophy. It was the weight and the terror of the impending danger that urged Nietzsche to turn these weapons just in the direction in which they were best able to meet it.

II

Hitherto the philosophers had been mainly concerned with the quest for Truth in itself, that is, for Truth apart and above Life. The young Nietzsche adopted Schopenhauer's blind 'Will to Exist' as the essence of the world; at the same time, following both Kant and Schopenhauer, he professed that all our knowledge about things in themselves is and remains but relative. The Truth as such is inaccessible to us and therefore from a practical standpoint non-existent. 'The habits of our senses have

a few months previously Nietzsche made the acquaintance of this book in its French translation under the title 'L'Esprit Souterrain,' and he recommends it to Overbeck in a letter of March 13th, 1887.

The 'Artifice of Self-Preservation'

wrapped us up in the tissue of lying sensations which in their turn lie at the base of all our judgment and "knowledge"—there are no means of exit or escape to the real world ! We are like spiders in our own webs, and, whatever we may catch in them, it will only be something that our web is capable of catching."

Travelling by this path we are in danger of losing ourselves in the gloomy wood of that philosophic despair which is the result of our own impotence and helplessness before the great riddle of existence. And since all search is in vain, we must either capitulate, at the risk of being crushed by our own scepticism and pessimism; or, if we are stubborn and vital enough, undertake the defence of life in the very teeth of the peril. This latter course was chosen by Nietzsche.

Realising that there are no truths and no knowledge as such, he consciously subdued not Life to the purposes of Knowledge, but so-called Knowledge with all its truths and opinions to the purposes of Life. For the real object is not to know, but to schematise—'to impose as much regularity and form upon chaos, as our practical needs require.' Consequently, '*truth is that kind of error* without which a certain species cannot exist. The Value for *Life* is ultimately

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

decisive.' Or to quote another, equally characteristic passage, 'the question is, in how far an opinion is life-furthering, life-preserving, species-preserving, perhaps species-rearing; and we are fundamentally inclined to maintain that the falsest opinions (to which the synthetic judgments *a priori* belong), are the most indispensable to us; that without a recognition of logical fictions, without a comparison of reality with the *purely imagined* world of the absolute and immutable, without a constant counterfeiting of the world by means of numbers, man could not live—that the renunciation of false opinions would be a renunciation of life. *To recognise untruth as a condition of life*; that is certainly to impugn the traditional ideas of value in a dangerous manner, and a philosophy which ventures to do so, has thereby alone placed itself beyond good and evil.'

And again: 'According to my way of thinking, "truth" does not necessarily mean the opposite of error, but, in the most fundamental cases, merely the relation of different errors to each other: thus one error might be older, deeper than another, perhaps altogether ineradicable, one without which organic creatures like ourselves could not exist; whereas other errors might not tyrannise over us to that extent as

The 'Artifice of Self-Preservation'

conditions of existence, but when measured according to the standard of those other "tyrants," could even be laid aside and "refuted." Why should an irrefutable assumption necessarily be "true"? This question may exasperate the logicians who limit *things* according to the limitations they find in themselves: but I have long since declared war with this logician's optimism.'

In other words, the only certain thing for Nietzsche is Life itself. And as he values all truths only by the degrees of their enhancement of life and power, philosophy becomes for him a matter of personal taste, of personal temperament, and personal needs. He even denounces the whole of so-called objective philosophy as a masked comedy of self-interest. According to him, every 'objective' philosopher is a victim of self-delusion because he chooses this or that standpoint as the only truth for strictly personal reasons, whether conscious or unconscious: in proclaiming his philosophy as infallible, he only wishes to see canonised his own personal need and veiled will to power.

'That which causes philosophers to be regarded half-distrustfully and half-mockingly,' he writes in *Beyond Good and Evil*, 'is not the oft repeated discovery how innocent they are

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

—how often and easily they make mistakes and lose their way, in short, how childlike and childish they are—but that there is not enough honest dealing with them, whereas they all raise a loud and virtuous outcry when the problem of truthfulness is even hinted at in the remotest manner. They all pose as though their real opinions had been discovered and attained through the self-evolving of a cold, pure, divinely indifferent dialectic (in contrast to all sorts of mystics, who, fairer and foolisher, talk of “inspiration”); whereas, in fact, a prejudiced proposition, idea, or “suggestion,” which is generally their heart’s desire abstracted and refined, is defended by them with arguments sought out after the event. They are all advocates who do not wish to be regarded as such, generally astute defenders, also, of their prejudices, which they dub “truths”—and *very* far from having the conscience which bravely admits this to itself; very far from having the good taste or the courage which goes so far as to let this be understood, perhaps to warn friend or foe, or in cheerful confidence and self-ridicule. The spectacle of the Tartuffery of old Kant, equally stiff and decent, with which he entices us into the dialectic by-ways that lead (more correctly mislead) to his “categorical imperative”—

The 'Artifice of Self-Preservation'

makes us fastidious ones smile, we who find no small amusement in spying out the subtle tricks of old moralists and ethical preachers. Or, still more so, the hocus-pocus in mathematical form, by means of which Spinoza has, as it were, clad his philosophy in mail and mask—in fact, the “love of *his* wisdom,” to translate the term fairly and squarely—in order thereby to strike terror at once into the heart of the assailant who should dare to cast a glance on that invincible maiden, that Pallas Athene: how much of personal timidity and vulnerability does this masquerade of a sickly recluse betray!

III

With such an attitude towards philosophy Nietzsche naturally remained an incorrigible sceptic with regard to Truth as such. On the other hand, it was this very relativity of truths which made it for him the easier always to choose precisely those provisional truths and standpoints which were best adapted to serve the purposes of his self-preservation in the face of an endangered life. His own mental Machiavellism gave him such an intellectual and spiritual freedom in the struggle with his fate

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

as to make him cope with it in all circumstances. 'The snake that cannot cast its skin perishes. So too with those minds which are prevented from changing their views: they cease to be minds,' he says; and in so far as he himself is concerned, he always 'cast his skin' with good conscience. Hence so many changes of his views. But, in the main, his philosophic activities are usually divided into three distinct phases or periods.

His first period (1869-76) is entirely under the sway of Schopenhauer's metaphysics. Nietzsche is a romantic pessimist, a magniloquent reformer and a heroic Educator (at least *in spe*) of mankind. He sees the highest possible types of humanity in the Philosopher, in the Tragic Artist, and the Saint (in the Christian and Buddhistic sense). He is full of enthusiasm for Wagner and his music. The most important works of this period are: *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) and the series of essays under the general title, *Thoughts out of Season*, which comprises: *David Friedrich Strauss* (1873) *The Use and Abuse of History* (1874), *Schopenhauer as Educator* (1874), *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* (1876).

Nietzsche's second period (1876-1881) is, on the whole, a refutation of the first. He has now become a sober 'free spirit'—free from

The 'Artifice of Self-Preservation'

Wagner, Schopenhauer, and from metaphysics in general. He extols science above art. Nietzsche the romanticist is replaced by Nietzsche the realist, who is interested only in facts, in the naked reality as such. Through observation, and especially through self-observation, he makes his first attempts at a thorough analysis of all our moral, religious and social values. He changes his very manner of expression. His two volumes of *Human-all-too-Human* (1878 and 1879-80) are written in compressed aphorisms, after the pattern of some old French moralists, and they are devoid of his former high-sounding pathos. So are *The Dawn of Day* (1881) and *The Joyful Wisdom* (1881-82).

The third period of Nietzsche (1882-88) is a reaction against his second dissecting and destructive phase. At the same time it has certain points of contact with his first romantic period, only on a firmer, on a more realistic basis. Once again Nietzsche wishes to rebuild and reform the whole of mankind; but now he finds his chief *point d'appui* in biology. Even in his conception of the Will to Power we detect merely a 'biological' modification of Schopenhauer's metaphysics. His thoughts and style reach their perfection in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1883-85), *Beyond Good and Evil* (1885), and

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

Genealogy of Morals (1887). *The Case of Wagner*, *The Twilight of Idols*, *The Antichrist*, and *Ecce Homo* were written in 1888, and their too exultant *verve* already begins to show symptoms of an approaching mental catastrophe.¹

These are, of course, only the main and rather contradictory phases of Nietzsche's evolution. But in each of these separate phases we may encounter numerous and varying inconsistencies, self-contradictions, and apparent falsehoods. The interesting point, however, is that the suffering Nietzsche perpetrated all these falsehoods quite honestly, *i.e.*, without any Tartuffery. He used them largely as means for his intellectual and physical self-preservation at a time when any preconceived conviction might have been perhaps an impediment on his way to recovery and self-conquest. He himself never tries to conceal this fact; for 'after all, the question is to what end are falsehoods perpetrated?'

'Crooked go great rivers and men,
Crooked, but turned to their goal;
That is their highest courage,
They dreaded not the crooked paths.'

Hence we must not be surprised at his later

¹ His very important work, *The Will to Power*, in which he attempted to give a kind of synthesis of his philosophy, remained unfinished.

The 'Artifice of Self-Preservation'

assertion (in *The Antichrist*) that 'men of conviction are of no account whatever in regard to all principles of value or of non-value. Convictions are prisons. They never see far enough, they do not look down from a sufficient height: but in order to have any say in questions of value and non-value, a man must see five hundred convictions *beneath* him—behind him. . . . A spirit who desires great things, and who also desires means thereto, is necessarily a sceptic. Freedom from every kind of conviction *belongs* to strength, to the *ability* to open one's eyes freely. . . . The great passion of a sceptic, the basis and power of his being, which is more enlightened and more despotic than he is himself, enlists all his intellect into its service; it makes him unscrupulous; it even gives him the courage to employ unholy means: in certain circumstances it even allows him convictions. Conviction as a *means*: much is achieved merely by means of a conviction. Great passion makes use of and consumes convictions, it does not submit to them—it knows that it is a sovereign power.'

IV

This protective scepticism and mental Machiavellism are in themselves a sufficient reason for Nietzsche's refusal and inability to make a philosophic system. ('I distrust all systematisers and avoid them. The will to system shows a lack of honesty.') His very nature, *i.e.*, his inherent Dionysian temperament, was incapable of adopting a stable and static 'system'; and so he was driven, as it were, into the opposite type of philosophy—the philosophy of change, of flux, of Becoming, of continuous experimenting upon ideas, upon life and upon himself. In this flux Nietzsche wanted to preserve the freedom of choosing alternately both radical convictions and a radical freedom from convictions, according to the needs of the moment.

In other terms, as a 'pragmatist' and as a fighter on behalf of Life he always seeks alliance with those elements, views, and ideas which might be useful for his immediate strategical purposes. Why should he not indulge for a while in orthodox positivism, for instance, if this could check a few qualities which threaten him? Why should he not invoke to-day the artist against

The 'Artifice of Self-Preservation'

the thinker, and to-morrow the thinker against the artist, should his strategy require it? To-day it is perhaps necessary to praise the scientist and expose the religious man; but to-morrow the situation (*i.e.*, Nietzsche's state of health) might change to such an extent that the religious man will be summoned to deride the self-complacent scientist. For, as Nietzsche avows, 'a philosopher who has made the tour of many states of health, and always makes it anew, has also gone through just as many philosophies, he really *cannot* do otherwise than to transform his condition on every occasion into the most ingenuous posture and position—this art of transfiguration is just philosophy.'

Further comments on the subject may be found in a letter Nietzsche wrote to Hans von Buelow in December, 1882: 'I will make no mention of the dangerous nature of my emotions, but this I must say, the altered manner in which I think and feel and which has been even expressed in my writings during the last six years, has *sustained* me in life and almost *made* me quite healthy. What do I care when my friends assert that my present attitude of a "free spirit" is an eccentric pose, a *resolve* made, as it were, with clenched teeth and wrung by force and imposed upon my genuine inclinations? So

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

be it, let it be a "second nature"; but I will prove yet that with this second nature alone I was able to become *possessed* of my first nature.'

Aware of these and other inconsistencies of which he might justly be accused, Nietzsche included this self-explanation, or perhaps self-defence, in the Preface to the second edition of *Human-all-too-Human* (1886): "Supposing however, that I were reproached with good reasons, what do *you* know, what *could* you know as to how much artifice of self-preservation, how much rationality and higher protection there is in such self-deception—and how much falseness I *still* require in order to allow myself again and again the luxury of *my* sincerity? . . . In short, I still live; and life, in spite of ourselves, *demands* illusion, it *lives* by illusion . . . but—There! I am already beginning again and doing what I have always done, old immoralist and bird-catcher that I am—I am talking unmorally, ultra-morally, "beyond good and evil."'

It is evident that this continuous 'artifice of self-preservation,' this unceasing inner vigilance and strategy would necessarily develop Nietzsche's psychological insight and subtlety to an almost incredible degree. They also led him to that deliberate simplification of his philosophic

The 'Artifice of Self-Preservation'

Weltanschauung which was best adapted to keeping alive all his capacities for self-defence and to stirring them up in an ever-increasing consciousness of his own strength, his will to health and power. This will was, as a rule, also decisive in his choice of 'convictions,' as well as in his *pros* and *contras*. Therefore, Nietzsche's very scepticism became for him a means of growth—in so far as he conceived life as a continuous Becoming, as something that creates itself anew every moment, increasing its own capacities, its power, exulting and revelling in the daring experiments with itself. Those who look upon life not as static Being but as dynamic Becoming, may even instinctively avoid any standpoints that would tie them to one 'fixed' conviction and thus impede their growth. On the other hand, this very attitude may simply lead to continuous experiments for their own sake, unless these are subjected to some higher aim or value.

Nietzsche always escaped this danger by means of self-imposed creative tasks, by a kind of pragmatic faith, and even pragmatic dogmatism when necessary. For 'the prerequisite of all living things and of their lives is that there should be a large amount of faith, that it should be possible to pass definite judgments on things,

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

and that *there should be no doubt* at all concerning all essential values.' And in the struggle which he waged in the name of his self-imposed 'faith in life' he was capable of becoming as ruthless at times as an inquisitor who clings to a creed not because he really believes in it, but because he knows that without it he would fall to pieces. So the sceptic and the 'dogmatic' trends of Nietzsche completed each other: both of them were necessary for his self-preservation, and he alternately sought their alliance in the unswerving wrestle with his own 'decadent' qualities.

CHAPTER V
SELF-INQUISITION

V

SELF-INQUISITION

I

'APART from the fact that I am a decadent, I am also the reverse of such a creature. That energy with which I sentenced myself to absolute solitude, and to a severance from all those conditions in life to which I had grown accustomed; my discipline of myself, and my refusal to allow myself to be pampered, to be tended hand and foot, and to be doctored—all this betrays the absolute certainty of my instincts respecting what at that time was most needful to me. I placed myself in my own hands, I restored myself to my health. This double thread of experience, this means to two worlds that seem so far asunder, finds in every detail its counterpart in my own nature; I am my own complement; I have a "second" sight, as well as a first. And perhaps I also have a third sight.'

To this avowal, taken from Nietzsche's

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

Ecce Homo, may well be added that the duality of a conscious decadent and of his equally conscious opponent is the thread which runs unbroken through the whole of Nietzsche's work and life. Each of his books represents a certain stage of the duel between these antagonists, and at least a theoretical self-conquest. No sooner did he discover a 'decadent' quality in himself than his philosophy invented a radical antidote with which to paralyse it. Hence the more he was aware of his own disease, the more he praised health, even brutal health; the more he realised his own weakness, and also a certain amount of inherited German sentimentality, the more he extolled strength, even aggressive and cynical strength. It was partly due to his innate gentleness that he sang hymns to hardness and cruelty, while the helplessness of an invalid made him clamour all the more for the will to power. In the same way he struggled with his pessimistic *Geist des Schwere* (the spirit of gravity), with his self-mistrust, his reverence for Schopenhauer, his Wagnerism, thus disciplining his will through a continuous antithesis against his own decaying elements. And even the violence of his blows against various diseases of the age always increased in the like proportion with his desire to rid himself of them. We find

Self-Inquisition

a good illustration to this effect in the history of his attachment to, and his quarrel with, Wagner.

Nietzsche himself acknowledged several times that the years of his friendship with Wagner were the happiest of his life. Nevertheless, after his last visit to Bayreuth (1876) he severed all his relations with the great musician—with the utmost cruelty towards himself. This sudden breach with his best friend, as well as Nietzsche's later attacks upon him and his music, gave rise to many misleading explanations. Some people saw in it even base motives, jealousy, and envy on the part of Nietzsche, who was thought to be vindictive because he himself had not succeeded as composer, in spite of his passion for music. The truth, however, is that in taking this step, Nietzsche was concerned not so much with Wagner as with himself. It is of considerable interest that in a letter to Rohde, written in October, 1868, the youthful Nietzsche makes this avowal: 'My pleasure in Wagner is much the same as my pleasure in Schopenhauer—the ethical air, the redolence of Faust, and also the Cross—death and the tomb.' The spirit of 'Wagnerism' was, so to speak, strong enough in Nietzsche himself to make him revel for years in Wagner's music. But as soon as he perceived in it a danger, more

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

—the acme of decadence, he decided to assert his own will to health and spiritual independence even at the price of the personal friendship of the great Master on whom he himself had written previously the enthusiastic panegyrics, *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* and *The Birth of Tragedy*.

Viewed in this light, Nietzsche's later assaults on Wagner, even the pathologic *Case of Wagner* and *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*, were the assaults of Nietzsche the doctor upon Nietzsche the patient—in so far as the latter knew that he needed the narcotic music of Wagner perhaps more than any professional Wagnerite. And this soothing narcotic was the more seductive and dangerous because of Nietzsche's personal attachment to the famous composer, which he had to break that he might not be broken by it. No wonder, therefore, that he wrote on Wagner's death to Peter Gast (Feb. 3, 1883): 'I am better now and I even believe that Wagner's death was the most substantial relief that could have been given me just now. It was hard for six years to have to be the opponent of the man one had most revered on earth, and my constitution is not sufficiently coarse for such a position.'

Self-Inquisition

II

This cruelty towards himself, towards his strongest inclinations and sympathies, is one of the basic qualities of Nietzsche—a quality which he gave full vent whenever he detected in himself symptoms of weakness: the wish to be ‘soothed’ for instance, or a tendency towards rest and resignation. He was so pitiless towards his own ‘decadent’ features that he indulged in chasing them on purpose, and sometimes toyed with them like a cat with the mouse, only in order to strangle them a moment later with all the greater hardness. He inflicted periodical blows on many things that he genuinely loved and admired, preferring to be at war with them rather than their slave. Besides, as he says, ‘war has always been the great policy of all spirits who have penetrated too far into themselves or who have grown too deep; a wound stimulates the recuperative powers.’

Feeding thus on his own wounds, Nietzsche always found enough pretexts to increase the consciousness of his strength, daring, and independence through a kind of self-inquisition. He often revelled with an almost sadistic pleasure in war against himself, and like a consistent

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

ascetic (in the reverse sense) he wished to surpass himself in, and through, this war.

‘But the worst enemy thou canst meet, wilt thou thyself always be; thou waylayest thyself in caverns and forests.

‘Thou lonesome one, thou goest the way to thyself! And past thyself and thy seven devils leadeth thy way!

‘A heretic wilt thou be to thyself, and a wizard and a soothsayer, and a doubter, and a reprobate, and a villain.

‘Ready must thou be to burn thyself in thine own flame; how couldst thou become new if thou have not first become ashes!’

It is this tendency which made Nietzsche frequently turn against his very ‘metaphysical comfort,’ that is, his æsthetic conception of the world as against the horrid knowledge of reality and life. The wavering between these two tendencies formed in fact the continuous Scylla and Charybdis of his philosophy. Already in 1875 Nietzsche wrote that ‘the extraordinary point in the life of a thinker is that two contradictory inclinations hold him at the same moment under their yokes and compel him to follow two different directions; on the one hand he wishes to know, and, abandoning unregretfully the firm land which sustains the life of men, he

Self-Inquisition

adventures into unknown domains ; on the other hand, he wishes to live, and without ever wearying, he seeks for a place in which to abide.'

The question which naturally presented itself to Nietzsche was whether his own æsthetic illusion was not merely an attractive 'place in which to abide.' What if his art of 'metaphysical comfort' were *in fine* nothing but a cleverly disguised refuge for a weakling who is not sufficiently strong to endure naked reality as such ? A suspicion of this kind was sufficient to make Nietzsche challenge his own æsthetic shelter, and he challenged it sometimes even by deliberately seeking out the ugliness and cruelty of life in order to prove on them his inner strength, his power of endurance.

'A thing could be true, although it were in the highest degree injurious and dangerous; indeed the fundamental constitution of existence might be such that one succumbed by a full knowledge of it—so that the strength of mind might be measured by the amount of "truth" it could endure—or to speak more plainly, by the extent to which it *required* truth attenuated, veiled, sweetened, and falsified,' he states in *Beyond Good and Evil*. He completes this passage on several occasions, especially in

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

The Will to Power, where he says: 'Philosophy, as I have understood it and lived it up to the present, is the voluntary quest of the repulsive and atrocious aspects of existence. . . . 'How much truth can a spirit endure; for how much truth is it daring enough? This for me was the real measure of value.' He goes even so far as to acknowledge that 'the kind of *experimental* philosophy which I am living, even anticipates the possibility of the most fundamental Nihilism, on principle: but by this I do not mean that it remains standing at a negation, at a *no*, or at a will to negation. It would rather attain to the very reverse.'

So we come to Nietzsche's conception of the 'tragic man' who does not shrink from the cruellest knowledge, being proud and strong enough to overcome it by his creative will. But is not knowledge of life only another form of self-knowledge? For, after all, we extract no other secrets from existence than those which we are able to extract out of our own selves, out of our own lives. This process may require extremely painful experiments on our most cherished desires, propensities, and illusions; but, according to Nietzsche, such experiments are the main prerequisite of our own growth.

'The seeker of knowledge operates as an

Self-Inquisition

artist and glorifier of cruelty, in that he compels his spirit to perceive *against* its own inclination, and often enough against the wishes of his heart: he forces it to say Nay, where he would like to affirm, love, and adore; indeed, every instance of taking a thing profoundly and fundamentally is a violation, an intentional injuring of the fundamental will of the spirit, which instinctively aims at appearance and superficiality—even in every desire for knowledge there is a drop of cruelty.'

So Zarathustra becomes a knower because he is a self-knower; and he is a self-knower because he is a 'self-hangman.'

' O Zarathustra,
Cruellest Nimrod!
Of late still a hunter of God,
A spider's web to capture virtue.
An arrow of evil!
Now
Hunted by thyself,
Thine own prey
Caught in the grip of thine own soul.

' Now
Lonely to me and thee,
Twofold in thine own knowledge,

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

Mid a hundred mirrors
False to thyself,
Mid a hundred memories
Uncertain
Weary at every wound,
Shivering at every frost,
Throttled in thine own noose,
Self-knower!
Self-hangman!

‘ Why didst bind thyself
With the noose of thy wisdom?
Why luredst thyself
Into the old serpent’s paradise?
Why stolest into
Thyself, thyself? . . .

‘ A sick man now,
Sick of serpent’s poison,
A captive now
Who hast drawn the hardest lot:
In thine own shaft
Bowed as thou workest,
In thine own cavern
Digging at thyself,
Helpless quite,
Stiff,
A cold corse

Self-Inquisition

Overwhelmed with a hundred burdens,
Overburdened by thyself,
A knower!
A self-knower!
The wise Zarathustra! . . .

Thou soughtest the heaviest burden,
So foundest thou thyself,
And canst not shake thyself off. . . .'

III

This 'Dionysus-Dithyramb' is a reliable description of Nietzsche's own self-inquisition, which, in his case, was above all an exercise in endurance. We are not short of the truth in saying that whatever else Nietzsche's 'morbid' philosophy may be, it is and remains a remarkable attempt at self-imposed discipline in the very teeth of the most desperate personal conditions one can imagine. It is the intimate diary of a man who had always to contend against his 'seven devils' and yet steadfastly refused to surrender. When a shallow individual has nothing by which to hold himself together he falls to pieces almost imperceptibly. He loses his soul bit by bit so

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

that he himself does not notice the moment of his spiritual death. But a man with the inward riches and the dynamic chaos of Nietzsche is on the verge of a catastrophe the very moment he has lost hold of that central idea which more or less keeps together all the divergent instincts and tendencies of his 'decadent' mentality. In certain cases the differentiation may be so far advanced that an apparent unity of one's Ego can be achieved only by the tyranny of a deliberately fostered *faculté maîtresse* over the rest.

This is, in fact, the only tactics that remains to Nietzsche—unless he should prefer resignation or suicide. The seductiveness of this course must have been tempting for him, especially at the moments of his greatest pains. But he parried the temptation, first of all, by purposely exaggerating the importance of his personal campaign against 'decadence.' In his heroic and painful strife he regarded himself as a champion of Life in general, a champion whose evidence against life would be a betrayal and an act of cowardice. So he preferred to hold out like a brave soldier who defends his position to the last moment, ever more intoxicated by the tension of the contest, by the pride and enjoyment of his very wounds and suffering.

'The formidable tension of the intellect that

Self-Inquisition

wishes to hold its own against pain shows everything that one looks upon in a new light, and the inexpressible charm of this new light is often powerful enough to withstand all the seductiveness of suicide and to make the continuation of life seem very desirable to the sufferer. His mind scornfully turns to the warm and comfortable dream-world in which the healthy man moves about thoughtlessly, and he thinks with contempt of the noblest and most cherished illusions in which he formerly indulged. He experiences delight in conjuring up this contempt as if from the depths of hell, and thus inflicting the bitterest sufferings upon his soul: it is by this counterpoise that he bears up against physical suffering—he feels that such a counterpoise is now essential! In one terrible moment of clear-sightedness he says to himself, “Be for once thine own accuser and hangman; for once regard thine suffering as a punishment which thou hast inflicted on thyself! Enjoy thy superiority as a judge: better still, enjoy thine own will and pleasure, thy tyrannical arbitrariness! Raise thyself above thy life as above thy suffering and look down into the depths of reason and unreason. . . .” Our pride revolts as it never did before, it experiences an incomparable charm in defending life against such a

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

tyrant as suffering and against all the insinuations of this tyrant, who would fain urge us to give evidence against life—we are taking the part of life in the face of this tyrant. In this state of mind we take up a bitter stand against all pessimism in order that it may not appear to be a consequence of our condition, and thus humiliate us as conquered ones. The charm of being just in our judgments was also never greater than now; for now this justice is a triumph over ourselves and over so irritated a state of mind that unfairness of judgment might be excused—but we will not be excused: it is now, if ever, that we wish to show that we need no excuse. We pass through downright orgies of pride.'

IV

This is how Nietzsche 'transvalues' his own sufferings in such a way as to make them a real stimulus to life—in so far as they imply an implacable war for existence. Instead of Schopenhauer's capitulation before the pains of life he accepts all its hardships and welcomes them in proportion as they call for daring, for power of resistance. He even identifies

Self-Inquisition

individual freedom itself with the indifference to hardship, severity, pain and privation—the indifference characteristic of a born warrior who looks with scorn upon all comfortable shelters or nests of ‘happiness,’ however near and alluring they might be.

‘Freedom denotes,’ he says in *The Twilight of Idols*, ‘that the virile instincts which rejoice in war and victory, prevail over other instincts; for instance, over the instinct of “happiness.” The man who has won his freedom, tramples ruthlessly upon that contemptible kind of comfort which tea-grocers, Christians, cows, women, Englishmen, and other democrats worship in their dreams. The free man is a *warrior*. How is freedom measured in individuals as well as in nations? According to the resistance which has to be overcome, according to the pains which it costs to remain *uppermost*. The highest type of free man would have to be sought where the greatest resistance has continually to be overcome.’

This attitude is one of the reasons for the warlike and heroic vein in Nietzsche’s philosophy, which goes to such lengths as to require that suffering and cruelty on earth should be not diminished but increased—in order to breed giants and titans through the discipline of

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

resistance. Far from accusing our existence on account of its pain, he even entertains the hope that life may one day become more evil, more full of pain and suffering than it has ever been before. In his opinion, suffering alone can bring an elevation of life and mankind, for great suffering is creative in the same way as the tendency of modern humanity towards philistine 'happiness' and comfort is somewhat degrading and paralysing.

'You want, if possible—and there is no more foolish "if possible"—to do away with suffering,' he warns the Christian utilitarians in *Beyond Good and Evil*, 'and we?—it really seems that *we* would rather have it increased and made worse than it has ever been before! Wellbeing, as you understand, is certainly not a goal: it seems to us an *end*, a condition which at once renders man ludicrous and contemptible—and makes his destruction *desirable*! The discipline of great suffering—know ye not that it is only this discipline that has produced all the elevations of humanity hitherto? . . . In man *creature* and *creator* are united; in man there is not only matter, shred, excess, clay, mire, folly; but there is also the creator, the sculptor, the hardness of the hammer, the divinity of the spectator, and the seventh day—

Self-Inquisition

do ye not understand the contrast? And that *your* sympathy for the "creature in man" applies to that which has to be fashioned, bruised, forged, stretched, roasted, annealed, refined—to that which must necessarily suffer, and is *meant* to suffer? And our sympathy is the worst of all pampering and enervation? So it is sympathy *against* sympathy.'

Thus through his own personal fate and 'art of transfiguration' Nietzsche arrived once more at his romantic ideal of the rearing of superman; save that now he would rear him by means of that very method through which he himself was compelled to go. He attempted to give to this ideal also an objective, even a scientific, justification, the study of which leads us straight into the biological foundations of Superman.

CHAPTER VI
THE GENESIS OF SUPERMAN

VI

THE GENESIS OF SUPERMAN

I

WE have seen that, although adopting the relativity of all truths, Nietzsche managed to avoid the danger of the philosophic pessimism typical of European thought after Hegel. He avoided it on the one hand by transforming this very relativity into an efficient weapon for his 'self-conquest'; and on the other, by retaining throughout all his changes an actively idealistic character. The combination of these two factors preserved Nietzsche from falling into that resignation which—seeing but chance and nonsense at the basis of existence—gives up all higher aims and cravings.

Considering all truths as errors which are necessary for the survival and assertion of a given species, Nietzsche necessarily proclaimed the body to be the measure of all things: the more so because he, being an invalid, was compelled, by his own state, to realise the tremendous importance of the body.

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

‘But the awakened one, the knowing one, saith: “Body am I entirely, and nothing more; and soul is only the name of something in the body.”’

‘The sick and perishing—it was they who despised the body and the earth, and invented the heavenly world, and the redeeming blood-drops; but even those sweet and sad poisons they borrowed from the body and the earth!

‘From their misery they sought escape, and the stars were too remote for them. Then they sighed: “O that there were heavenly paths by which to steal into another existence and into happiness!” Then they contrived for themselves their by-paths and bloody draughts!

‘Beyond the sphere of their body and this earth they now fancied themselves transported, these ungrateful ones. But to what did they owe the convulsions and rapture of their transport? To their body and this earth.’

On such a biological foundation Nietzsche based wellnigh the whole structure of his moral, social and individual philosophy. He was in fact never concerned with the question whether some or other morality, for instance, is ‘true’ in itself, considering any inquiry of this kind futile. What he wanted to find out was whether the species of man is of an ascending or of a

The Genesis of Superman

decaying type which needs a particular moral code for its survival. Consequently he proclaimed as good all that comes from an overflow of physical life, that elevates life, the will to power, and power itself in man; and as bad all that proceeds from weakness and generates weakness. And so the highest 'moral' code is that which is capable of rearing the highest biological human type—the Superman.

II

The ideal of superman, definitely propounded in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, is interesting not only as the acme attainable by a 'biological' idealism but also as a focus in which all Nietzsche's divergent and contradictory impulses have for a while a rendezvous. Nietzsche the positivist exults here side by side with his apparent antipodes, the metaphysician; Nietzsche the poet with Nietzsche the thinker; the merciless destroyer meets here the stern law-giver; while the laughing Dionysian dancer seems to be on the best of terms with the pathetic prophet. We see also Nietzsche's 'Promethean' double in company with the old Schopenhauerian romanticist sheltered by his protective 'æsthetic'

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

illusion. From preliminary notes and drafts for *Thus Spake Zarathustra* we even gather that the close co-operation of these last two antagonists played a prominent part in the very genesis of superman. The symbol, Zarathustra, was for Nietzsche a psychological necessity, so to speak, required both by his active idealism and his æsthetic impulse towards a dazzling illusion of strength and power. At the same time it embodies a remarkable attempt to blend the philosopher and the visionary poet through a kind of new Mythology with the aim of giving the modern man the example of the highest 'biological' type—an example which could stir up our lukewarm contemporaries to fresh goals and intoxicate them with new visions. In this respect the 'blasphemous' gospel of Zarathustra belongs to the category of great religious-ethical poetry, however much it tries to destroy our conventional ethics and creeds.

Every vital religion has an ideal type of man for its symbol—a perfect Adam—whose mere figure serves as a 'joyful message' and a new way of life. Christ and Buddha are the highest of such incarnate symbols, and have therefore influenced the fate and history of mankind. But there may also be possibilities of a sublime life on planes different from those of Christ or

The Genesis of Superman

Buddha, possibilities which under present conditions may perhaps be more capable of carving the ideal Man out of so-called humanity than what we generally understand as Christian or Buddhistic values. Among modern spirits Nietzsche alone dared to set up (whether rightly or wrongly) an ideal of this kind in his Superman.

Such an ideal, based not on the 'beyond,' but on this earthly, 'biological' existence, was necessary above all to Nietzsche himself—as the supreme justification of that challenge the daring and the thrilling tension of which helped him to bear with all the greater courage his own fate. It was in the name of the Superman that Nietzsche now examined the whole of modern life and modern mankind, detecting in them an orgy of the instincts of decay. In Zarathustra's name he assailed without pity also our current notions of good and evil, especially those whose aim it is to promote 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number.' Denouncing our morals as utterly immoral, from the standpoint of an ascending life, he declared war *à outrance* on them, as well as on all tendencies whose origin he traced in masked weakness, cowardice, and lack of vitality. One of his first victims in this campaign was his own teacher, Arthur Schopenhauer, in whose Buddhistic resignation he found

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

‘ the instinct of degeneration itself, which converts itself into an imperative: “ Perish! ” ’

Pushed by his disease towards a continuous struggle for his own life and towards the deliberate increase of his strength, Nietzsche was the more anxious to transvalue Schopenhauer’s metaphysical conception of the Will to Existence as the inner essence of all life—into the Will to Power.

‘ He certainly did not hit the truth who shot at it the formula: “ Will to existence: that will—doth not exist! ’

‘ For what is not, cannot will; that, however, which is in existence—how could it still strive for existence! ’

‘ Only where there is life, is there also will: not, however, Will to Life, but—so teach I thee—Will to Power! ’

. The will to power thus became for him the inner agent of all existence. He enlarged his biological conception of life by assuming that every living being manifests, in its own fashion, this inherent will, and that Life itself is but a continuous conflict between these various manifestations. It is, however, important to add that, in so far as humanity is concerned, Nietzsche does not make quite clear whether his Will to Power here becomes an independent

The Genesis of Superman

Will, a mere predetermined tool of Necessity, or a kind of *élan vital* as later developed by Bergson. In a certain sense, until his last period, he himself wavered between these three conceptions, leaning now towards one, now towards another, thus increasing the puzzling contradictions over which an unprepared reader stumbles at every moment. But from the point of view of his own 'biological' purposes, he interpreted his will to power as a storing up of life in its concrete earthly aspect, with the Superman as its supreme goal. For the sake of this goal he advocated the continuous increase of our vitality and power, through hardness and war, rating the epic grandeur of life higher than the so-called happiness of life. Hence his philippics against our notions of goodness and pity, against the prevailing mollification of life and morals.

'People hitherto have not had the least doubt in rating a "good man" as of higher worth than a "bad man," of higher worth for the advancement, utility, and benefit of man generally (including the future of man),' Nietzsche argues in the Preface to his *Genealogy of Morals*. 'What, if the reverse should be true? What, if there should be a symptom of retrogression in the "good man," and likewise a seduction, a poison,

101
THE NEW YORK
LIBRARY
NEW YORK

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

a narcotic, by means of which the present per-adventure *lives at the cost of the future*? Perhaps more comfortably, less dangerously, but also in an inferior style, more meanly? So that precisely morality would be to blame for it, if a *supreme degree of power and splendour* of the human type, possible in itself, should never be realised; so that morality itself would be the danger of dangers?' And in one of his last books (*The Twilight of Idols*) he sums up his entire attitude to this problem: 'Our mollification of morals—this is my cry; this if you will is my *innovation*—is the outcome of our decline; conversely hardness and terribleness in morals may be the result of a surplus of life. When the latter state prevails, much is dared, much is challenged, and much is also *squandered*. That which formerly was simply the salt of life, would now be our *poison*. To be indifferent—even this is a form of strength—for that likewise we are too senile, too decrepit: our morality of fellow-feeling, against which I was the first to raise a finger of warning, that which might be called *moral impressionism*, is one symptom the more of the excessive physiological irritability which is peculiar to everything decadent. That movement which attempted to introduce itself in a scientific manner on the shoulders of

The Genesis of Superman

Schopenhauer's morality of pity—a very sad attempt!—is in essence the movement of decadence in morality. Strong ages and noble cultures see something contemptible in pity, in the “love of one's neighbour,” and in a lack of egotism and of self-esteem. Ages should be measured according to their *positive forces*; valued by this standard that prodigal and fateful age of the Renaissance appears as the last *great* age, while we moderns, with all our anxious care of ourselves and love of our neighbours, with all our unassuming virtues of industry, equity, and scientific method—with our lust of collection, of economy and of mechanism—represent a *weak* age.’

Nietzsche's biological idealism generates in him a mania for seeking symptoms of decadence in the whole of modern sociology, philosophy, politics, and especially in that Christian and democratic herd-morality (as he calls it) whose psychological roots he defined with such extraordinary penetration in his polemic work, *The Genealogy of Morals*. He saw it as an instinctive tendency to protect the quantity of the species man at the expense of its quality. And as in the whole of modern morality he divined a life-denying instinct and a disguised endeavour of weaklings to enfeeble the strong

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

and reduce them to their own level of biological decay precisely by means of 'moral' principles, Nietzsche did his best to unmask, to undermine by every possible means all that modern Europe labels as morality.

'The European disguises himself *in morality* because he has become a sick, sickly, crippled animal, who has good reasons for being "tame," because he is almost an abortion, an imperfect, weak, and clumsy thing,' he asserts in *The Joyful Wisdom*. 'It is not the fierceness of the beast of prey that finds moral disguise necessary, but the gregarious animal, with its profound mediocrity, anxiety and ennui.' Whence follows (in Nietzsche's opinion) that all current morality is 'a sort of counter-movement opposing Nature's endeavours to arrive at a *higher type*. Its effects are: mistrust of life in general (in so far as its tendencies are *felt* to be immoral), hostility towards the senses (in so much as the highest values are felt to be opposed to the higher instincts),—degeneration and self-destruction of "higher natures," because it is precisely in them that the conflict becomes *conscious*.'

The Genesis of Superman

III

As a counter-measure against the domination of 'taming' morals Nietzsche devises not immorality, but a rigorous 'morality of rearing'—a kind of higher Eugenics with the object of husbanding all those forces which could produce a new and stronger species of man.

In his notes for *Zarathustra* Nietzsche made several drafts referring to such eugenic recipes. In one of them we find rules such as these:—

'A new nobility, the result of breeding. Feasts celebrating the foundation of families.

'The day divided up afresh; bodily exercises for all ages. *Agon* (rivalry) as a principle.

'The love of the sexes as a contest around the principle in becoming and coming.—Ruling will be taught and practised, its hardness as well as its mildness. As soon as one faculty is acquired in a masterly manner another one must be striven after.

'We must let ourselves be taught by the evil, and allow them an opportunity of a contest. We must make use of the degenerate.—The right of punishment will consist in this, that the offender may be used as an experimental subject (in dietetics): this is the consecration of punishment,

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

that one man be used for the highest needs of a future being.'

Wishing to rear powerful rather than 'good' men—men who are strong enough to manage even their most dangerous instincts—Nietzsche preached not the elimination of passions and 'evil' instincts, but their utmost development, since they also are elements which we must conquer for the sake of our own growth. The so-called evil and terrible features may even be the best school for our will-power if we are able to govern them and become their lords. 'With every degree of man's growth towards greatness and loftiness, he also grows downwards into the depth and into the terrible: we should not desire the one without the other—or better still: the more fundamentally we desire the one, the more completely we shall achieve the other.'

This is one of the reasons why Nietzsche rates the so-called barbaric 'beast of prey' (he was fond of 'colossal' words) higher than the civilised 'tame and sickly animal.' He finds the former more hopeful with regard to new possibilities and potencies of a grand life. As a tonic against the gradual softening of modern Europeans, Nietzsche thought it even desirable that a kind of 'Promethean barbarians'—to use his own expression—should force

The Genesis of Superman

their way into our present civilisation; barbarians coming from above, and not from below: 'a kind of conquering and ruling natures, which are in the search of material that they can mould.'

Now, in order that these 'conquering and ruling natures' of the future should not be devoid of material, Nietzsche is ready to offer them all the rest of mankind. But since, in his opinion, history is only a roundabout way to the production of a few superior individuals like Napoleon and Cæsar, there is no serious obstacle that could forbid him to look upon the rest of humanity as a necessary manure for these few supermen. Nietzsche goes indeed to such lengths as to propose that this manure should be preserved by all possible means just in those forms which would be most likely to ensure the existence of a powerful *élite*. His conclusion is that for this purpose it would be best if the 'herd' retained its herd-morality—in so far at least as this morality alone is capable of giving the few 'masters' that material on which they could exercise their will to power as on their opposites. What he really wants is a kind of quarantine—a strict line between the ascending and the decaying elements, between the values of 'the masters' and those of 'the herd.' For this reason he carries on his ruthless campaign

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

against decadence, and, at the same time, proclaims decadence as a necessary condition of growth itself. According to him, it is infamous on the part of socialists, for example, to argue that 'circumstances and social combinations could be devised which would put an end to all vice, illness, prostitution, and poverty'; for decadence necessarily belongs to all periods of human history. Where there is growth there must be also refuse and decaying matter; such is the law of vital processes. The highest culture and the greatest corruption are always parallel phenomena—they go, so to speak, hand in hand. In this way, Nietzsche admits of a parallelism of ascending and decaying elements. More, he directly advocates the co-existence of entirely opposite kinds of moral valuations—on the condition that such co-existence should be regulated by the principle of hierarchy, or, as he himself puts it, by the order of rank.

'My philosophy,' he says in *The Will to Power*, 'aims at a new *order of rank*: not an individualist morality. The spirit of the herd should rule within the herd—but not beyond it: the leaders of the herd require a fundamentally different valuation for their actions, as do also the independent ones or the beasts of prey.'

The Genesis of Superman

And the standard ?

‘ The modicum of power which you represent decides your rank: all the rest is cowardice,’ replies Nietzsche in the manner of a general who is distributing his forces before the battle.

Carried away by his idea of hierarchy, Nietzsche sets exploitation at the base of his social system, endeavouring to prove that a grand life and grand cultures have existed hitherto only in those communities which were founded on tyranny, or even on unconditional slavery. Sometimes he seems to vacillate between the principle of exploitation and that of co-operation. Towards the end he even tries to reconcile them. At any rate, in his anti-utilitarian and anti-democratic campaign he eventually reserves the great suffering only for the hard pioneers of life; as to the ‘good’ and forbearing masses, they ought to have their well-being and be spared the trials and hardships of the leaders. This concern, however, is merely the care of a breeder to maintain the conditions most favourable for the success of his experiments. Hence the anti-decadent Nietzsche becomes an enthusiastic supporter of all those decadent factors which are necessary to fill up, as well as possible, certain departments of his order of rank.

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

‘We are atheists and immoralists, but we take care to support the religions and the morality which we associate with the gregarious instinct: for by means of them, an order of men is, so to speak, being prepared, which must at some time or other, fall into our hands, which must actually *crave* for our hands. Beyond Good and Evil—certainly; but we insist upon the unconditional and strict preservation of herd-morality.’

‘I have declared war against the anæmic Christian ideal (together with what is closely related to it), but only to put an end to its *tyranny* and clear the way for other *ideals*, for *more robust* ideals. . . . The continuance of the Christian ideals belongs to the most desirable of desiderata: if only for the sake of the ideals which wish to take their stand beside it and perhaps above it—they must have opponents, and strong ones, too, in order to grow strong themselves. That is why we immoralists require the *power of morality*: our instinct of self-preservation insists upon our opponents maintaining their strength—all it requires is to *become* master of them.’

‘The *levelling* of the mankind of Europe is the great process which should not be arrested; it should even be accelerated. The necessity

The Genesis of Superman

of *cleaving gulfs*, of *distance*, of the order of *rank*, is therefore imperative; but not the necessity of retarding the process above mentioned.'

IV

Passages of this kind demonstrate that, with regard to organisation of humanity Nietzsche's scheme, with its rules and ranks, is somewhat reminiscent of the strict hierarchy or discipline of the Prussian army of yore. On the other hand, his sociological recipes for a collective treatment are largely a generalisation of his own self-treatment and self-discipline; or, better, of his endeavour to save his own health, and faith in Life.

It seems as though the diseased Nietzsche had extended his personal tragedy and dilemma over the whole of the modern sick and decadent Europe, almost identifying its disease, its fate, with his own. Besides, does he not often plainly confess this? 'My greatest preoccupation hitherto has been the problem of *decadence*, and I had reasons for this,' one finds in the Preface to *The Case of Wagner*, 'I had to side against all that was morbid in myself, including Wagner, including Schopenhauer, including the whole

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

of modern humanity! ' In the dangers threatening the organism of the whole of Europe he thus rediscovers, as it were, his personal dangers, and *vice versa*. And so his own fight, self-discipline, and will to victory must acquire in his eyes a symbolic, a univereal significance. It is not only his own disease and fate that are in question when he contends against them: his self-cure and self-conquest will necessarily show the way to the cure of the whole of mankind; while his defeat would mean also the hopelessness of their recovery. And since his philosophy propounds the only radical means and method of recovery, he becomes (in his own estimation) the greatest contemporary philosopher and law-giver: a new Manu, a new Zoroaster. He is, in fact, 'a Destiny,' or at any rate, a ruler whose duty it is to set an example to the rest—a task the responsibility of which is in truth capable of keeping one alive even in the face of the greatest sufferings and obstacles.

'The terrible task of the ruler who educates himself: the kind of man and people over which he will rule must be forecast in him: it is in himself therefore that he must first have become a ruler.'

'The great educator, like nature, must elevate obstacles in order that these may be overcome.'

The Genesis of Superman

It is hardly necessary to say that such an attitude towards his own pains on the part of Nietzsche must needs deepen not only the significance of his personal tragedy, but also the feeling of his responsibility, of the importance of his own struggle, as well as his pride in being a sufferer on a 'titanic' scale, or even a kind of Redeemer crucified by Fate.

Those transvaluations, which he needed as measures for his self-preservation, he thus continues *sub-specie* of mankind. He destroys and builds with the proud consciousness of being a teacher and prophet who has a greater life-task than any before him, and who is working not for the present day but for millenniums. Or, as he writes to his sister (in August, 1883): 'The whole meaning of the terrible physical suffering to which I was exposed lies in the fact that, thanks to it alone I was torn away from an estimate of my life-task which was not only false but a hundred times *too low*. And as by nature I belong to the modest among men, some violent means were necessary in order to recall me to myself.'

CHAPTER VII
NIETZSCHE AND RELIGION

VII

NIETZSCHE AND RELIGION

I

HAVING begun to value the whole of life according to its highest biological standard, Nietzsche was obliged to apply the same measure not only to morality but also to religion as such, quite apart from his own religious or irreligious propensities. The problem thus became for him not whether there is, or is not, an 'objective' truth in religion, but simply whether religion with its inherent belief in God (and therefore in Providence and Finality) is a positive or a negative value for Life. Once decided against it, he was driven to combat religion as a manifestation of decadence, and he would have opposed it even more fiercely had he been convinced that the Truth was not on his side but on the side of religion.

'That which separates us from other people,' he explains in *The Antichrist*, 'is not the fact that we can discover no God, either in history

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

or in nature, or behind nature—but that we regard what has been revered as “God,” not as “divine,” but as wretched, absurd, pernicious; not as an error, but as a *crime against life*. . . . We deny God as God. . . . If the existence of this Christian God were *proved* to us, we should feel even less able to believe in Him. . . . A religion such as Christianity which never once comes in touch with reality, and which collapses the very moment reality asserts its rights even on one single point, must naturally be a mortal enemy of the “wisdom of this world.”

‘What meaning,’ he asks again in *Ecce Homo*, for example, ‘have those lying concepts, those handmaids of morality, “Soul,” “Spirit,” “Free Will,” “God,” if their aim is not the physiological ruin of mankind? When earnestness is diverted from the instincts that aim at self-preservation and an increase of bodily energy, *i.e.*, at an increase of life; when anæmia is raised to an ideal and the contempt of the body is construed as the “salvation of the soul,” what is all this if it is not a recipe of decadence?’ And again (in *The Will to Power*): ‘I loathe Christianity with a deadly loathing, because it created sublime words and attitudes in order to deck a revolting truth with all the tawdriness of justice and godliness.’

Nietzsche and Religion

His attacks upon religion in general, and the Christian religion in particular, were the more violent because of the innate religious temperament of which he never could rid himself. In other terms, Nietzsche represents an interesting example of a man whose convictions have become irreligious while his inherited instincts, his 'Unconscious,' have remained intensely religious. But considering everything that points beyond the body as a treachery to earth, and therefore as weakness and decadence, he tried to repress religion as radically as he had struggled against his physical disease.

However, in all these attempts he stumbled over his own religious temperament to such an extent that his very atheism was of a religious kind—frequently reminding one of a Satanic 'God-struggler.'¹ One can even affirm that his own religious temperament grew in proportion as he stubbornly tried to repress it. It is also typical of this virulent Anti-Christian that he on several occasions confessed his profound admiration for the personality of Christ, and now and then even for genuine Christian ascetics, as for example in this aphorism: 'All reverence on my part to the ascetic ideal, in so far as it is

¹ Refer to Chapter V. in *Dostoevsky and His Creation*, by the same author.

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

honourable! So long as it believes in itself and plays no pranks on us! But I like not all these coquettish bugs who have an insatiate ambition to smell of the infinite until eventually the infinite smells of bugs.'

While inherited instincts often drew him to Christ and His Religion in their highest manifestations, his mania for 'strength' rebelled all the more violently, justifying itself by the lower, historical, forms of Christianity, in which he found only veiled weakness, cowardice, mendacity, cant, and utilitarianism of the worst kind—in short, the whole compendium of 'decadent' virtues. As he declared in *The Antichrist*, 'the fatal feature of Christianity lies in the necessary fact that its faith had become as morbid, base, and vulgar as the needs to which it had to minister were morbid, base, and vulgar.' Consequently, it was not so much his reason, but his taste that decided against Christianity.

II

It is common knowledge that Nietzsche was the son of a pastor, and that several generations of his ancestors had followed the same profession. He himself in his boyhood was called by his

Nietzsche and Religion

comrades *der kleine Pastor*, and from his earliest youth he began preparing himself for the Church. Even on entering the University in Bonn he matriculated first in Theology, which he, however, relinquished in the second term for classical philology. His sister, Frau E. Fœrster-Nietzsche, says that her brother 'was a very pious child; he pondered deeply over religious questions and always endeavoured to convert his thoughts into deeds.' It may be also of interest that among the poems the young Nietzsche wrote in the winter of 1863-64, while still in the high-school of Pforta, we find this curious composition under the title, *To the Unknown God*, which testifies to his profound religiosity:—

' Once more, before my vision turns
To strange horizons, untried lands,
To thee I lift my lonely hands
For whom my spirit yearns,
To whom, within its ultimate shrine,
Are solemn altars dedicate
While yet I wait
The summoning voice to claim me thine.
Thereon is writ in characters ablaze
The deep-cut legend, " To the Unknown
God ";

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

For his am I, although my feet have trod,
Even to this hour, in foul and miry ways,
Yea, I will know thee, great Unknown,
Who shakest the foundations of my soul,
Urgent and clamorous as the thunder's
roll.

Eternally apart, eternally my own,
Yea, I will know thee—I will serve thee.¹

The poem speaks for itself. Nietzsche was at that time still permeated with the religious spirit of German Protestantism, upon which soon was to be grafted a profound admiration for everything Hellenic. It was the vision of the dazzling ancient Hellas on the one side, and the influence of Schopenhauer's philosophy on the other, that helped Nietzsche in his emancipation from the last remainders of the inherited Christian creed; but while divesting himself of the latter he still retained or even increased his inherent religiosity. It is possible that, amongst other reasons, his profound religious instinct was too strong, too uncompromising, to find at that transition-period a proper outlet in modern Christianity, and therefore rejected it—with a religious impetus. From a remark of Nietzsche's sister, we gather in fact that 'perhaps

¹ Translated by Rose Fyleman.

Nietzsche and Religion

the very reason why from youth onward he drew farther and farther away from Christianity lay in his deep religious sense, which could find no satisfaction in the Christianity of our day. As he often remarked, he had not undergone any struggles, but it was extremely painful for him to give up his faith in God.' The reasons Zarathustra enumerates in his meeting with the pope out of service, may, furthermore, explain why also Nietzsche's 'taste' turned against the equivocal Christian God.

'How he raged at us this, this wrath-snorter, because we understood him badly! But why did he not speak more clearly! And if the fault lay in our ears, why did he give us ears that heard him badly?

'Too much miscarried with him, this potter who had not learned thoroughly! That he took revenge on his pots and creations, however, because they turned out badly—that was a sin against *good taste*.

'There is also good taste in piety: *this* at last said: "Away with *such* a God! Better to have no God, better to set up destiny on one's own account, better to be a fool, better to be God oneself!'

This kind of irreligion and unbelief was prompted in Nietzsche as much by his honesty

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

towards himself as by his own organic religiosity. 'O Zarathustra, thou art more pious than thou believest, with such an unbelief!' exclaims the pope out of service. 'Some God in thee has converted thee to thine ungodliness. Is it not thy piety itself which no longer letteth thee believe in God?'

It goes without saying that such a paradoxical dilemma is typical of many serious religious temperaments of our age. And as Nietzsche was, and could not help being, one of them, he was driven to attack what we call religion not only for 'biological' reasons, but above all because of his own unsatisfied religious consciousness. Only a latent 'Christian at heart' could have been so violently Antichristian as Nietzsche was. His own Antichristianity was, therefore, a kind of violence upon his own nature. His anti-religious outbursts were to a great extent merely inverted religiosity; for much religion is necessary in order to become irreligious in the sense of Nietzsche.

Nietzsche's sister relates that 'the pious women who made his acquaintance simply could not understand how this noble thinker could fail to be a good Christian, and at heart they deplored the mistake.' And compare with Nietzsche's gospel of 'un-Christian' hardness

Nietzsche and Religion

and cruelty the following episode, also recorded in the biography written by his sister:—

‘ On his walks my brother had seen a little invalid boy sitting in front of a cottage. The boy seemed rather deserted, since his parents were occupied with the hay harvest. Nietzsche fell into the habit of passing the child almost every day and giving him sweets. He even took the child a little cloth, which he moistened at a neighbouring spring, to wipe the child’s face. The parents said that the boy was happy all day in the anticipation that the “ kind gentleman ” would come. My brother made inquiries as to the nature of his malady, and promised that, if the child were taken to Bâle, he should be cured at his expense. Immediately after his arrival in Bâle Nietzsche actually made arrangements for placing the boy in an infirmary. He learned, however, to his sorrow that the poor little fellow had died in the interim, saying all the time: “ I shall soon go to the kind gentleman.” ’

On the other hand, it would be false to suppose that Nietzsche had renounced Christianity because he did not care to penetrate into the profounder recesses of the Christian religion. Between the lines of certain of his aphorisms we feel that he must have thoroughly studied even various

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

aspects of esoteric Christianity, of Christian mysticism. His definition of the true spirit of the Christian religion as devised by Jesus Christ (paragraphs 33 and 34 in *The Antichrist*) would do honour to any professional mystic. Besides, he himself says plainly: 'The Christianity of my forbears reaches its logical conclusion in me: a stern intellectual conscience, fostered and made by Christianity itself, turns against Christianity: in me Christianity raises itself and overcomes itself.'

Nietzsche's very Paganism is more Christian than he cares to acknowledge. In truth, Nietzsche, whose mentality was much nearer that of a self-tormenting Pascal, or an inverted Saint Paul, than that of an ancient Greek, had a profound personal experience of Christianity; and although he surpassed it intellectually, organically he never could surpass it—in spite of the desperate efforts of his will and his intellect to do so. His very attacks prove that he took Christianity and religion extremely seriously. More, he recommends the same serious attitude towards them to all people with earnest intellectual conscience. It is in the name of this conscience that he requires from Christians themselves, as well as from all those who are religious out of their earnestness and

Nietzsche and Religion

their profundity, that they should deliberately test their religious character through its opposite. In other words, those who are still Christians at heart owe it to their own inner honesty to live for a certain time without Christianity! 'They owe it *to their faith* that they should thus for once take up their abode in the wilderness—if for no other reason than that of being able to pronounce on the question whether Christianity is needful. So far, however, they have confined themselves to their own narrow domain and insulted every one who happened to be outside it; yea, they even become highly irritated when it is suggested to them that beyond this little domain of theirs lies the great world, and that Christianity is, after all, only a corner of it! No; your evidence on the question will be valueless until you have lived years without Christianity, and with the utmost desire to continue to exist without it: until, indeed, you have withdrawn far, far away from it. It is not when your nostalgia urges you back again, but when your judgment, based on a strict comparison, drives you back, that your homecoming has any significance! Men of coming generations will deal in this manner with all the valuations of the past; they must be voluntarily *lived* over again, together with their contraries, in order

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

that such men may finally acquire the right of shifting them.'

III

Many more illustrations could be quoted to this effect. Nietzsche's inherently religious personality was so strong that he was able only to 'transvalue,' never to overcome it. His clamorous religious instinct demanded some kind of satisfaction. In order to provide this, Nietzsche repeatedly had recourse to various, more or less efficient substitutes for religion.

The first of these substitutes was that Dionysian state which he had analysed in *The Birth of Tragedy*, and to which he so often referred in his later works. The Dionysian impulse is, in essence, of a dynamic religious character, but this religion is still simmering like an elemental subterranean force in the subconscious instincts: it is the religious man still imprisoned by the 'biological' man, whose fetters he now and then breaks in violent volcanic eruptions like a primeval force which for a time dissolves rather than enlarges the individual as such.

'From that height of joy in which man feels himself completely and utterly a deified form

Nietzsche and Religion

and self-justification of nature, down to the joy of healthy peasants and healthy semi-human beasts, the whole of this long and enormous gradation of the light and colour of *happiness* was called by the Greek—not without that grateful quivering of one who is initiated into the secret, not without much caution and pious silence—by the god-like name: Dionysus. What then *do* all modern men—the children of a crumbling multifarious, sick and strange age—*know* of the *compass* of Greek happiness, how could they know anything about it! Whence would the slaves of “modern ideas” derive their right to Dionysian feasts.’

Nietzsche modified, now and then, his conception of the Dionysian spirit, until he gave it this final definition (in his *Will to Power*): ‘The word “Dionysian” expresses: a constraint to unity, a soaring above personality, the commonplace, society, reality, and above the abyss of the *ephemeral*: the passionately painful sensation of the super-abundance, in darker, fuller, and more fluctuating conditions: an ecstatic saying of yea to the collective character of existence as that which remains the same, the equally mighty and blissful throughout the change; the great pantheistic sympathy with pleasure and pain, which declares even the most terrible and

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

most questionable qualities of existence good, and sanctifies them; the eternal will to procreation, to fruitfulness, and to recurrence; the feeling of unity in regard to the necessity of creating and annihilating.'

That is how Nietzsche, the great fighter against any kind of mysticism and religion, smuggles into his philosophy his own religious impulses in a disguised and 'transvalued' form. He himself becomes conscious of their religious character and tries to justify them by their pagan flavour. 'We should ascertain whether the typically *religious* man is a decadent phenomenon (the great innovators are one and all morbid and epileptics); but do not let us forget to include that type of the religious man who is *pagan*,' he reasons in *The Will to Power*, and asks: 'Is the pagan cult not a form of gratitude for, and affirmation of, Life? Ought not its most representative type to be an apology and a deification of Life? The type of a well-constituted and ecstatically overflowing spirit! The type of a spirit which absorbs contradictions and problems of existence and which *solves* them!' Or take this passage, typical of a visionary who is personally acquainted with religious ecstasies: 'And how many new Gods are not still possible! I myself, in whom the

Nietzsche and Religion

religious—that is to say, god-creating instinct occasionally becomes active at the most inappropriate moments: how differently the divine has revealed itself every time to me! . . . So many strange things have passed before me in those timeless moments, which fall into a man's life as if they came from the moon, and in which he no longer knows how old he is or how young he still may be!'

And as bringing forward yet another facet of Nietzsche's mentality, the following lines are interesting, since they directly concern those modern scholars who, from their scientific pedestal, look superciliously upon everything religious: 'Every age has its own divine type of *naïveté* for the discovery of which other ages may envy it: and how much *naïveté*—adorable, childlike, and boundlessly foolish *naïveté*—is involved in this belief of the scholar in his superiority, in the unsuspecting, simple certainty with which his instinct treats the religious man as a lower and less valuable type, beyond, before, and *above* which he himself has developed—he, the little, arrogant dwarf and mobman, the sedulously alert, head-and-hand drudge of "ideas," of "modern ideas"!'

So it comes about that while Nietzsche extols the biological conception of life with all its

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

scientific, positivistic, and other paraphernalia, we find in his works ever-recurring metaphysical elements, a kind of mystical ecstasies and prophetic moods, curiously intertwined with their own antagonists.

This duality remained in Nietzsche, in various and changing proportions, to the end; the proportions being again largely determined by his personal momentary needs and desires.

CHAPTER VIII
THE TWILIGHT OF GOD

VIII

THE TWILIGHT OF GOD

I

NIETZSCHE'S most clamorous impulse was that towards power and exuberant vitality—precisely because he rather lacked both. Prompted by this craving he turned the more fiercely against religion, suspecting in it a warm and cosy rest-house for all who had been similarly buffeted by life. It is not for nothing, therefore, that he writes: 'How much faith a person requires in order to flourish, how much "fixed opinion" he requires which he does not wish to have shaken, because he holds himself thereby—is a measure of his power (or, more plainly speaking, of his weakness). Most people in old Europe still need Christianity at present, and on this account it still finds belief.'

So long as Nietzsche takes this attitude towards Christianity, an unconditional denial of it on his part logically becomes an argument in favour of his personal strength, liberty, and

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

self-assertion. And the further he goes the stronger grows the argument; so that the ultimate denial—the facing of a world without God, without finality and meaning—is tantamount to an unmistakable proof (or illusion) of his own power. The more so because the degree of man's will-power 'may be measured from the extent to which he can dispense with the meaning of things, from the extent to which he is able to endure a world without meaning.'

Here we come once again upon the Promethean vein which might have led Nietzsche to an even more violent defiance and negation of God had he been less doubtful of His existence. One need scarcely say that a negation of this kind is on a different plane from the current atheism, and also implies quite different dangers. Nietzsche realised these dangers. He knew only too well what the consciousness of humanity loses with the 'death of God'; but, in a certain sense it was the *greatness* of the loss and of the risk that made such a negation alluring to him.

'The most important of more recent events—that "God is dead," that the belief in the Christian God has become unworthy of belief—already begins to cast its first shadow over Europe,' he writes on this subject in *The Joyful Wisdom*. 'To the few at least whose eye, whose

The Twilight of God

suspecting glance, is strong enough and subtle enough for this drama, some sun seems to have set, some old profound confidence seems to have changed into doubt: our old world must seem to them daily more darksome, distrustful, strange, and "old." In the main, however, one may say that the event itself is far too great, too remote, too much beyond people's power of apprehension for one to suppose that so much as the report of it could have *reached* them; not to speak of many who already knew what had *really* taken place, and what must all collapse now that this belief had been undermined—because so much was built upon it, so much rested on it, and had become one with it: for example, our entire European morality. This lengthy, vast, and uninterrupted process of crumbling, destruction, ruin and overthrow which is now imminent: who has realised it sufficiently to-day to have to stand up as the teacher and herald of such a tremendous logic of terror, as the prophet of a period of gloom and eclipse, the like of which has probably never taken place on earth before?'

This is also the reason why Nietzsche's 'madman with the lamp' laments: 'Where is God? I will tell you. We have killed Him, you and I. We are all His murderers! But how

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

did we do it? How did we drink the ocean? Who gave us the sponge to wash off the entire horizon? What did we do when we separated this earth from its sun? Whither is it travelling now? Whither are we travelling? Away from all suns? Is there still a height and a depth? Are we not wandering towards everlasting annihilation? Do we not perceive the indications of this immense void? Is it not colder? Is not the night becoming darker and darker? Must we not light our lanterns at noon?'

II

A profound kind of ecstasy may be derived from one's inward 'union with God,' through which life and the world seem to become perfect for a while and full of eternal significance. But this mystical ecstasy has its counterpart in what we might call a magic ecstasy, which can assume two aspects—the religious and the irreligious. The first we see in a Luciferic believer who repudiates God in the name of his own, cosmic, independence and self-affirmation. The second is to be found in the unbeliever who realises the ultimate senselessness and horror of Life and Universe without God, and yet—left in

The Twilight of God

the eternal void without any moral, religious or other solace—tries to face it unflinchingly, with that superhuman defiance from which he may obtain at times an inward intoxication with his own power and daring an ecstasy as great as that of a mystic, although these two ecstasies are on the opposite poles of human consciousness. 'If he had required a God in the past, he now delights in cosmic disorder without a God, a world of accident, to the essence of which terror, ambiguity, and seductiveness belong.'

Certain profound, but desperate and therefore reckless souls may indulge in this intoxication as in a kind of drug which gives them the necessary illusion of inward 'strength' and 'greatness'—until they are crushed by the reverse of this very intoxication. And its reverse is the unbearable feeling of the absolute casualness and cosmic solitude of Man. It is the weight of their own 'new terrible liberty' which often drives back even the strongest natures to the 'will to believe' and to the uncertain hypotheses of God and the absolute validity of Morals. Is not Kant's 'Practical Reason' perhaps a return of this kind? And Tolstoy's stunted 'Christianity'? Both Kant and Tolstoy tried to secure their position by proclaiming man's moral conscience as something

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

beyond all questioning, as the eternal law and voice of God Himself. Nietzsche, however, accepted the 'death of God' with all its logical and psychological consequences, which are far from comforting. For as soon as we reject God and Finality all our old beliefs and spiritual values, such as the belief in immortality, in a supreme Justice, Wisdom and Moral Law—perish for ever. We are uprooted in a cosmic sense and plunged headlong into that 'immense void' whose infinity may prove more haunting, more terrible than the submission to the cruellest universal Tyrant.

'We have left the land,' exclaims Nietzsche (in *The Joyful Wisdom*), 'and have gone aboard ship! We have broken down the bridges behind us—nay, more, the land behind us! Well, little ship! Look out! Beside thee is the ocean. . . . Times will come when thou wilt feel that it is infinite, and that there is nothing more frightful than infinity. Oh, the poor bird that felt itself free and now strikes against the walls of this cage! Alas, if homesickness for the land should attack thee, as if there had been more *freedom* there—and there is no land any longer.'

Nietzsche's further conclusions are hardly designed to render one less home-sick for the

The Twilight of God

land: 'The collective character of the world is to all eternity chaos—not in the sense of the absence of necessity, but of the absence of arrangement, organisation, method, beauty, wisdom and whatever else our æsthetic humanities are called. . . . Let us be on our guard against saying that there are laws in nature. There are only necessities; there is no one who commands, no one who obeys, no one who transgresses. When you know that there is no final goal you know also that there is no chance, for it is only in a world with final goals that the word "chance" has a meaning.—Let us be on our guard against saying that death is the contrary of life. The living being is only a species of the dead being, and a very rare species. . . .'

One step farther, and we are overwhelmed by that pessimism whose only solution is either Buddhism or suicide.

III

And yet, Nietzsche's 'Promethean' individuality desires to assert itself in defiance of the universal void and chaos. Even if the

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

Cosmos and Life as such have no meaning, man must be strong enough to say yea to his existence. He must plunge into the void with the superlative daring of a new God whose creative Will has to revalue and remould the whole of our life in such a way as to give it significance—in spite of everything.

‘God is dead! And we have killed Him! How shall we be consoled for this, we murderers of murderers? He Whom the world held to be most sacred and most powerful has bled on our knives—who shall wash the stain of this blood from us? In what water can we be purified? Is not the very greatness of this act too great for us? Must not we ourselves become Gods to seem worthy of it? Never before was so great a deed performed—and all those born after us will, by this very fact, belong to a higher form of history than any that has hitherto existed.’

Here one involuntarily recalls the words of Dostoevsky’s maniac, Kirillov, who—long before Nietzsche and for analogous reasons—divided the history of the world into two parts: from Gorilla to man, and from man to Man-God through the ‘death of God.’ Kirillov was so overwhelmed by his new consciousness that he went mad. But stronger and more adventurous

The Twilight of God

spirits, especially those possessed by a Satanic pride, may derive from their boundless self-will more enduring 'tasks,' illusions, and intoxicating charms.

'Now we have acquired good courage for errors, experiments, and the provisional acceptance of ideas—and for this very reason individuals and whole races may now face tasks so vast in extent that in former years they would have looked like madness, and defiance of heaven and hell. Now we have the right to experiment upon ourselves! Yes, men have the right to do so! The greatest sacrifices have not yet been offered up to Knowledge—nay, in earlier periods it would have been sacrilege, and a sacrifice of our eternal salvation, even to surmise such ideas as now precede our actions.'

'God is a conjecture,' says Zarathustra : 'but I do not wish your conjecturing to reach beyond your creating will.

'Could ye *conceive* a God?—Then, I pray you, be silent about all Gods! But ye could well create the Superman.

'Could ye *conceive* a God?—But let this mean Will to Truth unto you, that everything be transformed into the humanly conceivable, the humanly visible, the humanly sensible! Your own discernment shall ye follow out to the end!

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

‘And how would ye endure life without that hope, ye discerning ones? Neither in the inconceivable could ye have been born, nor in the irrational.

‘But that I may reveal my heart entirely unto you, my friends: *if* there were Gods, how could I endure it to be no God! *Therefore* there are no Gods.’

Thus we arrive at that line where the unlimited self-will of Man begins and where Man-God is born. As Nietzsche says in another work, ‘We philosophers and “free spirits” feel ourselves irradiated as by a new rosy dawn by the report that “the old God is dead”; our hearts thereby overflow with gratitude, astonishment, presentiment, and expectation. At last the horizon seems once more unobstructed, granting even that it is not bright; our ships can at last start on their voyage once more, in face of every danger; every risk is again permitted to the knowing ones; the sea, our sea, again lies open before us; perhaps there was never such an open sea.’

The Twilight of God

IV

The above is little more than the first and perhaps somewhat forced exultation of the self-will which does not yet realise that by escaping the 'tyranny' of God it may arrive at another, more humiliating and more dreadful tyranny: the blind determinism of a mechanistic Universe. For if we assume that man is but a casual temporary bubble in the play of blind cosmic forces, then our consciousness and our will, with all their manifestations, are determined (in their minutest details) not by us, but by those forces. So long as we shut our eyes to this we may safely preach the proud and daring Man-God. The more seriously we take ourselves and humanity the stronger may become our endeavours to fill up the void caused by the 'death' of God with a new common goal for ourselves as well as for mankind. This goal would then be something self-imposed; something that mankind would agree to adopt by their own free will, thus replacing the old transcendental moral law by a new law—the highest 'humanly sensible' law that is within the scope of their creative will. 'A thousand goals have there been hitherto, for a thousand peoples have there

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

been. Only the fetter for the thousand necks is still lacking; there is lacking the one goal. As yet humanity has not a goal.'

But while propounding the necessity of such an obligatory common aim which could provide 'the fetter for the thousand necks,' Nietzsche does not seem to be aware of the contradiction between this tendency towards a universal Value of good and evil and his own radical self-will which is bound to undermine any tendency of this sort. Does not the same Nietzsche say, 'My opinion is *my* opinion: another person has not easily a right to it'? Or, 'Good is no longer good where one's neighbour takes it into his mouth. And how could there be a "common good"?'

So it happened that the further Nietzsche went in his conclusions the greater became his contradictions as well as his dangers. His object was a general change of human consciousness, analogous to the change produced by Christianity, only in the opposite direction. But by abolishing altogether the 'higher world' and reducing Man only to his biological limits, he practically cut off all the aims that transcend these limits. Severed from such aims, man is thus doomed to base everything either upon his own self-will and land in that solipsism and

The Twilight of God

self-glorification which was the final stage of Nietzsche's own development; or upon an inexorable compulsion on the part of the 'strong' ones.

Nietzsche was not afraid of these conclusions. But, on the other hand, the very pathos with which he denied God and everything that is not 'humanly conceivable' betrays a suppressed longing for the absolute and endless—that longing which, in equally profound but less defiant individuals, finds its ultimate satisfaction only in religion, in a mystical union with God.

v

In his autobiographical (and for this reason somewhat misleading) *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche emphasises that he never was acquainted with atheism as a result, or an event in his life. 'In me it is inborn, instinctive. I am too inquisitive, too incredulous, too high-spirited, to be satisfied with such a palpably clumsy solution of things. God is a too palpably clumsy solution of things; a solution which shows a lack of delicacy towards us thinkers—at bottom He is really no more than a coarse and a rude *prohibition* of us: ye shall not think! . . .'

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

The repudiation of such a conception does honour to a thinker. But what about higher conceptions of God—such as we see in Christ as well as in those mystics who found, or pretended to find, their real freedom, and the religious affirmation of all things (*Amor Fati*) only in God, and through God? It is precisely strong individuals who often experience such an overflow of rich inner life that they *must* believe in God—in order to bow before Him. For if they do not bow before God, they are logically compelled to bow before themselves; and if they are strong enough not to bow before themselves, they will eventually be crushed by their own strength.

It is more than probable that one of Nietzsche's intimate secrets was a profound longing for God. But like Dostoevsky's Ivan Karamazov, he would not accept, more—he had no *moral* right to accept a God in whom he found no real value for Life. Besides, even if he were sure of His existence, his own sufferings and pride would have forbidden him to 'waggle his tail' before Him. He knew that an abandoned invalid like himself could find perhaps reconciliation to his life and fate in a religious resignation, the allurements of which probably increased in the proportion as his pains became unbearable; but for this very reason Nietzsche

The Twilight of God

would prefer to challenge his 'hangman-God' like a modern Job, rather than coquette with Him.

In the lamentations poured out by the Magician in Zarathustra's cave, Nietzsche gives a striking portrait of a 'God-tortured' spirit who is longing with all the greater frenzy for God the more passionately he rejects Him. The whole poem refers to Richard Wagner (symbolised in the Magician); yet we may with easy conscience apply it to Nietzsche himself, for in it he depicts also his own 'case.'

'Who warm'th me, who lov'th me still?
Give ardent fingers!
Give heartening charcoal-warmers!
Prone, outstretched, trembling
Like him, half-dead and cold, whose feet
one warm'th—
And shaken, ahl by unfamiliar fevers,
Shivering with sharpened, icy-cold frost-
arrows,
By thee pursued my fancy!
Ineffable! Recondite! Sore-frightening!
Thou huntsman 'hind the cloud-banks!
Now lightning-struck by thee,
Thou mocking eye that me in darkness
watcheth:

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

—Thus do I lie,
Bend myself, twist myself, convulsed
With all eternal torture,
And smitten
By thee, cruellest huntsman,
Thou unfamiliar—*God*. . . .

‘Smite deeper!
Smite yet once more!
Pierce through and rend my heart!
What mean’th this torture
With dull, indented arrows?
Why look’st thou hither,
Of human pain not weary,
With mischief-loving, godly flash-glances?
Not murder wilt thou,
But torture, torture?
For why *me* torture,
Thou mischief-loving, unfamiliar God?—

‘Ha! Ha!
Thou stealest nigh
In midnight’s gloomy hour? . . .
What wilt thou?
Speak!
Thou crowd’st me, pressest—
Ha! now far too closely!
Thou hear’st me breathing,
Thou o’er-hear’st my heart

The Twilight of God

Thou ever jealous one!
—Of what, pray, ever jealous?
Off! Off!
For why the ladder?
Would'st thou *get in*?
To heart in-clamber?
Shameless one! Thou unknown one!—
Thief!
What seek'st thou by thy stealing?
What seek'st thou by thy hearkening?
What seek'st thou by thy torturing?
Thou torturer!
Thou—hangman-God!
Or shall I, as the mastiffs do,
Roll me before thee?
And cringing, enraptured, frantical
My tail friendly—waggle!

' In vain!
Goad further!
Cruellest goader!
No dog—thy game just am I,
Cruellest huntsman!
Thy proudest of captives,
Thou robber 'hind the cloud-banks. . . .
Speak finally!
Thou lightning-veiled one! Thou unknown
one!

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

Speak!

What wilt thou, highway-ambusher, from
—*me*?

What *wilt* thou, unfamiliar—God?

What?

Ransom-gold?

How much of ransom-gold?

Solicit much—that bid'th my pride!

And be concise—that bid'th mine other
pride!

'Ha! Ha!

Me—want'st thou? Me?

—Entire? . . .

'Ha! Ha!

And torturest me, fool that thou art,

Dead-torturest quite my pride?

Give *love* to me—who warm'th me still?

Who lov'th me still?—

Give ardent fingers,

Give heartening charcoal-warmers,

Give me, the lonest,

The ice (ah! seven-fold frozen ice,

For very enemies,

For foes, doth make one thirst),

Give, yield to me,

Cruellest foe,

—*Thyself*!—

The Twilight of God

' Away!

There fled he surely,
My final, only comrade,
My greatest foe,
Mine unfamiliar—
My hangman-God! . . .

' —Nay!

Come thou back!
With all thy great tortures!
To me the last of lonesome ones,
Oh, come thou back!
All my hot tears in streamlets trickle
Their course to thee!
And all my final hearty fervour—
Up-glow'th to *thee*!
Oh, come thou back,
Mine unfamiliar God!
My *pain*!
My final bliss !'

CHAPTER IX
'WE IMMORALISTS'

IX

' WE IMMORALISTS '

I

THE tragedy of our transitional period is partly caused by the fact that many of the beliefs and values which during the last two thousand years have been ennobling the European barbarians have already ceased to be innerly valid for us, while no substitutes, nor new means for our further growth, have been as yet discovered. Thus our Christian morality, based on the condition that God is Truth and therefore He alone knows what is good and what is evil, necessarily stands and falls with our belief in God. The 'death' of God is bound to shatter the very foundations of our morals: all values become relative; they are transferred upon the plane of 'beyond good and evil.'

It is mainly the dread of this 'beyond good and evil' that makes many people cling to the Christian morality even in cases when they no longer believe in its transcendental

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

premises. The result is an inner contradiction which is particularly painful in those individuals whose moral consciousness is highly developed and, so to speak, organic. While their strong moral instincts continually postulate an over-moral (religious) justification, their own intellectual conscience may obstinately deny its possibility.¹ And an uncompromising moral consciousness may eventually turn against morality as such if it does not find an over-moral and over-personal basis.

Therefore, it is not a mere accident that the four chief representatives of modern consciousness, Dostoevsky, Ibsen, Nietzsche, and Tolstoy, have dedicated most of their mental energy to the moral problem. Nietzsche in particular has made it his chief concern.

Is man still honest and proud enough not to cling to the fictions of an 'ideal world' in which he does not believe? And if so, is it possible to find a new moral code for a new consciousness and a new mentality? In other words, are we strong enough to face the 'death' of God and yet achieve the highest pitch of perfection that is possible on earth?

¹ A detailed psychological treatment of this process can be found in *Ibsen and His Creation* (Collins), by the same author.

'We Immoralists'

These are the central problems of Nietzsche; and however often he calls himself immoralist he is not only one of the outstanding vivisectioners of moral psychology, but also—after his own manner—one of the most vehement moral teachers the modern times have produced.

II

The biological reason of Nietzsche's refutation of our current 'Christian' morals has been already discussed. He discovered at their base so much disguised weakness which avenges itself on life, so much 'poison' and dishonesty towards oneself, that he could not help exclaiming: 'As long as your morality hung over me I breathed like one asphyxiated. That is why I throttled this snake. I wished to live, consequently it had to die.' But apart from biological motives, his fight against Christian moral valuations was largely due also to the fact that in his case these valuations turned against themselves because Christianity itself (in its best sense) was over-developed in him. In a highly interesting passage he hints at the downfall of Christianity through its own insuperable moral doctrine, 'which turns against

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

the Christian God Himself (the sense of truth highly developed through Christianity, ultimately revolts against the falsehood and fictitiousness of all Christian interpretations of the world and its history).' And he repeats the same idea in this significant sentence: 'We ought to be most profoundly thankful for what morality has done hitherto: but now it is no more than a burden which may prove fatal. *Morality itself* in the form of honesty urges us to deny morality.'

According to Nietzsche, the whole of mankind has reached that point where God must 'die.' Consequently all former morality must be transvalued in order to save mankind, from the threatening moral chaos. His 'immoralism' is, therefore, in its essence, one of the boldest individual attempts to save morality, and he was the first to give a personal example in this direction. In effect, there are few modern writers and thinkers whose nature and life would bear comparison with those of Nietzsche even from the point of view of Christian morals. It is noteworthy that the simple inhabitants of the part of Genoa where he lived for a time regarded him almost as a saint, and even called him *il Santo*. In his private life he often reminds one of a rigid Protestant Puritan

‘ *We Immoralists* ’

consciously transferred upon an Antichristian plane. And however frequently he coquettes with the ‘beasts of prey,’ extolling the *Unnatur* (the animal nature) in man, he only proves at the end that he himself is as moral in his ‘immorality’ as he is pious in his ‘ungodliness.’ In other terms, he destroys morals only out of morality; his own moral honesty urges him away from an outgrown type to another, more vital, type of morals.

‘To what extent is the *self-destruction of morality* still a sign of its own strength?’ he asks in one of the chapters of *The Will to Power*. ‘We Europeans have within us the blood of those who were ready to die for their faith; we have taken morality frightfully seriously, and there is nothing which we have not, at one time, sacrificed to it. On the other hand, our intellectual subtlety has been reached essentially through the vivisection of our consciences. We do not yet know the “whither” towards which we are urging our steps, now that we have departed from the soil of our forbears. But it was on this very soil that we acquired the strength which is now driving us from our homes in search of adventure, and it is thanks to that strength that we are now in mid-sea, surrounded by untried possibilities and things undiscovered

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

—we can no longer choose, we must be conquerors, now that we have no land in which we feel at home and in which we would fain “survive.” A concealed “yea” is driving us forward, and it is stronger than our “nays.” Even our *strength* no longer bears with us in the old swampy land: we venture out into the open, we attempt the task. The world is still rich and undiscovered, and even to perish were better than to be half-men or poisonous men. Our very strength itself urges us to take to the sea; there where all suns have hitherto sunk we know of a new world.’

III

The kernel of Nietzsche’s moral ideal, as embodied in his Zarathustra, may be briefly summed up in the formula that the moral value of an action depends neither on a transcendental reason nor on the action itself, but only on the value of the man who performs it. All things are lawful—but only to those who are great enough and noble enough for such a gospel. In order to possess a virtue one must first have the right to it. The highest morality exists only where it is inevitable—in the

' We Immoralists '

highest type of man, who alone is the law-giver, the measure of things. Such a law-giver is and must be hard—not only to others, but first of all to himself. As to the rest, the 'many-too-many,' they must have their crutches, their illusions, even their 'Christian' illusions if necessary; for nothing is more dangerous than a cruel truth for which one is not ripe.

It was Nietzsche's own Christian impulse of honesty and cleanliness towards himself that made him repudiate the 'love for one's neighbours,' at the bottom of which he saw but petty selfishness and fear of suffering. The same transmuted Christian impulse prompted to him the opposite ideal—the heroic 'love for the farthest' for whose sake we must sacrifice ourselves, without shrinking even from the greatest pains and sufferings.

'Ye flee unto your neighbour from yourselves,' admonishes Zarathustra, 'and would fain make a virtue thereof: but I fathom your unselfishness.

'Higher than love to your neighbour is love to the farthest and future ones. . . .

'The farthest ones are they who pay for your love to the near ones; and when there are but five of you together, a sixth must always die.

'Let the future and the farthest be the motive

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

of thy to-day; in thy friend shalt thou love the Superman as thy motive.

‘ My brethren, I advise you not to neighbour-love—I advise you to farthest love! ’

In order to rear the Superman of the future he is merciless to the man of the present. He looks upon him as a sculptor looks upon the clay out of which he wishes to make a statue. Hence his creative hardness, as well as his passionate hatred of any bridges of falsehood to old and outlived ideals; of ‘ anything whatsoever that is “unworthy of belief” ’; whether it goes by the name of God, virtue, truth, justice, or brotherly love.’

Although stripped of everything, Nietzsche still wishes to affirm his faith in Life, in Man, and in his nobility. ‘ I deprive you of everything,’ he says in a draft to *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, ‘ of God, of duty—now you must stand the severest test of noble nature. For here the way lies open for the profligates—take care.’

Nietzsche the ‘ immoralist ’ certainly stood the test of his own noble nature. But he succumbed to another danger which invariably accompanies every morality in one’s own name—the danger of self-glorification.

‘ The noble type of man regards *himself* as a determiner of values; he does not require to

‘ *We Immoralists* ’

be approved of; he passes the judgment; ‘ What is injurious to me is injurious in itself ’; he knows that it is he himself only who confers honour on things; he is a *creator of values*. He honours whatever he recognises in himself: such morality is self-glorification.’

In other words, since he could not bow before God, he bowed before himself. His self-glorification eventually degenerated into that megalomania which reached its highest pitch at the moment of his mental catastrophe.

CHAPTER X
NIETZSCHE CÆSAR

X

NIETZSCHE CÆSAR

I

BEFORE proceeding further with our analysis it will be well to consider certain more or less external factors which also influenced the whole trend of Nietzsche's philosophy and at the same time developed his inner duality to a tension that may have greatly contributed to his subsequent mental breakdown.

The first of these causes was a complete and stupid ignoring of his books on the part of the German Press and public. As a matter of fact, Nietzsche's rancour and resentment against Germans and German culture were largely due to this circumstance, of which he complains in so many of his letters. For just when the ambitious philosopher most needed belief in himself and in his mission there was not a word of encouragement on the part of German public opinion. On account of his very first book, perhaps one of the profoundest existing analyses

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

of the Greek Tragedy, he was even ostracised by the German professional philologists, who managed to discredit him to such an extent that for a while he lost nearly all his students at the University of Bâle. As late as 1888 he wrote to his friend, Seydlitz: 'And look at our dear Germans! . . . Although I am in my forty-fifth year and have published about fifteen books, no one in Germany has yet succeeded in producing even a moderately good review of a single one of my works. . . . There have been evil and slanderous hints enough about me, and in the papers, both scholarly and unscholarly, the prevailing attitude is one of ungoverned animosity—but how is it that no one feels insulted when I am abused? And all these years no comfort, no drop of human sympathy, not a breath of love.'

This animosity and lack of sympathy were all the more dangerous to Nietzsche because of his innate modesty and his almost feminine craving for the support of stronger characters. It was the softness of his own soul that often threatened to undermine his spiritual independence even after he had tried to assert this independence by painful experiments upon himself and upon his 'strength.'

He makes a special confession of this weakness

Nietzsche Cæsar

in a letter to Peter Gast (August 20, 1880): 'They (losses of friends) constitute the cruellest sacrifices my path in life and thought has exacted from me—and even now the whole of my philosophy totters after one hour's sympathetic intercourse with total strangers! It seems to me so foolish to insist on being in the right at the expense of love, and *not to be able to impart* one's best for fear of destroying sympathy. *Hinc meæ lacrimæ.*'

The extent of his doubts of himself may also be best illustrated by some of his letters. For instance, in 1874 (October 7) he writes to Rohde: 'Truth to tell, I live through you; I advance by leaning upon your shoulder, for my self-esteem is wretchedly weak and you have to assure me of my own value again and again. In addition to that, you are my best examples, for both you and Overbeck bear life's lot with more dignity and less wailing, although in many respects things are more and more difficult for you than for me.' And in March, 1881, he reminds the same friend: 'Friends like yourself must help me to sustain my belief in myself.'

And what a gap in his soul he felt after his sudden breach with Wagner—the only man who knew how to encourage him by his sympathy! Long after their quarrel the lonely Nietzsche

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

remembered those days with a kind of sad rapture. 'For my part,' he complained on this account in 1880, 'I suffer terribly when I lack sympathy; nothing can compensate me, for instance, for the fact that for the last few years I have lost Wagner's friendly interest in my fate. How often do I dream of him, and always in the spirit of our former intimate companionship! No words of anger have ever passed between us, not even in my dreams—on the contrary, only words of encouragement and good cheer, and with no one have I ever laughed so much as with him. All this is now a thing of the past—and what does it avail that in many respects I am right and he is wrong? As if our lost friendship could be forgotten on that account!'

In the years of his greatest depression he had no one to cheer him. The more his timid and jealous ambition craved for friends, for disciples, for encouragement, for belief in himself and in his task, the greater was the silence. 'I confess,' he writes in 1883 (August 16) to the most devoted of his friends, Peter Gast, 'that what I should most like at present would be for some one else to compile a sort of digest of the results of all my thought, and thereby draw a comparison between me and all other thinkers up to my time. Out of a *veritable abyss* of the

Nietzsche Caesar

most undeserved and *most enduring* contempt in which the whole of my work and endeavour has lain since 1876, I long for a word of wisdom concerning myself.'

II

Unfortunately, this word of wisdom did not come in time. The silence round him and his work remained as undisturbed as before. In his 'subterranean burrowing' he felt, therefore, more and more lonely, more and more abandoned.

'Oh, dear friend,' he writes to Rohde (February 22, 1884), 'what an absurdly silent life I lead! So much alone, so much alone! So "childless"! ' And in 1887 (November 11): 'Who has ever approached me with a thousandth part of my passion and my suffering? Has any one even an inkling of the real cause of my prolonged ill-health over which I may even yet prevail? I am now forty-three and am just as much alone now as I was as a child.'

'Where are those old friends with whom in years gone by I felt so closely united?' he asks his sister (July 8, 1886). 'Now it seems as if we belonged to different worlds, and no longer spoke the same language! Like a stranger and

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

an outcast, I move among them—not one of their words and looks reaches me any longer. I am dumb—for no one understands my speech—ah! but they never did understand me!—or does the same fate bear the same burden on its soul? It is terrible to be condemned to silence when one has so much to say.’

‘It has now lasted ten years: no sound any longer reaches me—a land without rain,’ he complains again in the drafts to *The Will to Power*, and adds: ‘A man must have a vast amount of humanity at his disposal in order not to pine away in such drought.’

It was because of this drought that he so clung to his very few friends and unconsciously exaggerated their talents and their significance, often rating them much higher (for example, in the case of Peter Gast) than his own. It also explains why he greeted with such enthusiasm every casual admirer and disciple who called him Master, or Teacher. Yet in vain. The ‘drought’ went on as before. Eventually his instinct of self-preservation prompted to him the only outlet that was at his disposal: he must ‘transvalue’ his loneliness in such a way as to make it bearable, even creative. And the most successful kind of transvaluation was for him the proud acceptance of loneliness as the result

Nietzsche Cæsar

of his own superiority and also of that super-human task which was involved by this superiority. 'He shall be the greatest who can be the most solitary, the most concealed, the most divergent, the man beyond good and evil, the master of his virtues, and of superabundance of will; precisely this shall be called greatness.' —(*Beyond Good and Evil*).

'I feel that I am *condemned* to my solitude and my citadel,' he writes to Malvida von Meysenbug (May 12, 1887). 'There is no longer any alternative. That which bids me live, my exceptional and weighty task, bids me also keep out of the way of men and no longer attach myself to any one.'

A man with Nietzsche's timidity and ambitions will be inclined to exaggerate this 'pathos of distance' in proportion as he is conscious of his own weakness and has recurrent doubts of himself. He will deliberately magnify the importance of his personality and of his task. At last he will avoid every one and everything that makes him waver in his ambitions, in his opinion of himself. 'One must keep out of the way of the kind of creature who does not understand awe and respect,' he writes apropos Fräulein Salomé in one of his letters. And in another (August, 1883) he warns his sister:

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

‘Remember, my dear sister, never to remind me either by word of mouth or in writing of those matters that would deprive me of my self-confidence, aye, almost of the whole point of my existence hitherto.’

The heavier the burden of loneliness the stronger must be the psychological tonic. And since the weight can be relieved only by the consciousness that one’s loneliness is equal to one’s greatness, it follows that the most unbearable loneliness demands the strongest consciousness of one’s importance: a ‘grand style’ and a grand task become necessary as a means of self-preservation. In short, one has to find more and more reasons for magnifying both one’s own ‘greatness’ and that of one’s task.

The continuous development of such excuses can also be traced in Nietzsche’s private correspondence. In July, 1882, he openly confesses to Rohde: ‘I find it *too hard* to live if I cannot do so in the *grand style*—this in confidence to you, my old comrade! Without a goal that I could regard as inexpressibly important I should not have been able to hold myself aloft in the light above the black floods. This is really my only excuse for the sort of literature I have been producing ever since 1875; it is my recipe, my

self-concocted medicine against the disgust of life.'

He needs this medicine in stronger and stronger doses—up to the degree of self-hypnotism which makes him see nothing but his own 'truth,' his own standpoint. 'Was there ever any one's attitude towards things more daring than mine?' he asks his friend Paul Deussen (in 1886). 'But one must hold out—*man muss es aushalten können*: this is the test; I am indifferent towards what one "says" or "thinks" about it. Finally—I want to be right not for to-day and for to-morrow, but for millenniums.'

And two years later he reproaches his sister much more categorically: 'You do not even seem to be remotely conscious of the fact that you are next-of-kin to the man and his destiny, in which the question of millenniums has been decided—speaking quite literally, I hold the future of mankind in my hand. . . . The task that lies upon me is after all my own nature—and thus only now have I some idea what the happiness was that awaited me all this time. I play with a burden that would crush every other mortal. For that which I have to accomplish is *terrible*, in every sense of the word. I do not challenge only individuals—I challenge the

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

world of mankind with a terrific indictment. However the judgment may fall, for or against us, my name is in any case linked up with a fatality the magnitude of which is unutterable.'

III

In this way, much that was felt before as an unbearable weight is now transmuted into the happiness and bliss of the lonely *déraciné* who is so high above ordinary mortals that a descent towards them, or even friendship with them, would be a kind of self-pollution. He now revels in his pride to such an extent that he rejects the mere idea that any one could be worthy of his company and of his love. 'I equally do not believe that I could love any one, for this would involve the supposition that at last—O, wonder of wonders!—I should find a man of my own rank.'

So we get one more proof that Nietzsche's egotism was largely a tragic reverse of, or better still, a self-protective reaction against, his own isolation. And the climax of this reaction we find perhaps in his autobiography, *Ecce Homo*, which shows that his self-esteem and self-glorification grew, step by step, out of

Nietzsche Cæsar

that loneliness and those doubts of himself against which he had no other antidote, no other means of self-defence.

‘Why I am so clever,’ he heads one of his chapters; and others, ‘Why I am so wise,’ ‘Why I write such excellent books.’ And in the preface to the same work he says: ‘This book, the voice of which speaks across the ages, is not only the loftiest book on earth, literally the book of mountain-air—the whole phenomenon, mankind, lies at an incalculable distance beneath it—but it is also the deepest book.’

‘This work,’ he writes in the same strain about his *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, ‘stands alone. Do not mention the poets in the same breath . . . compared with it everything that other men have done seems poor and limited. . . . Goethe and Shakespeare would not for an instant have known how to take breath in this atmosphere of the heights.’

‘Speaking in all earnestness,’ he says again, ‘no one before me knew the proper way, the way upwards: only after my time can men once more find hope, life-tasks, and roads mapped out that lead to culture—I *am* a joyful harbinger of this culture. . . . On this account alone I am also a fatality.’

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

‘My genius resides in my nostrils. . . . Mankind can begin to have fresh hopes only now that I have lived.’

And in a letter to Brandes in winter, 1888, a few weeks before he became entirely insane, we find: ‘I vow to you that I am a destiny.’ Almost at the same time he wrote to his friend Overbeck: ‘Dear friend, we must settle the matter with Fritzsche (Nietzsche’s publisher) quickly, because in two months I shall be the first man on earth.’ But while trying thus to deceive his fate, he himself was deceived by it. In the critical moment his mind was overwhelmed by his own megalomania. On the eve of his complete breakdown (December 31, 1888) he wrote to August Strindberg, who at that time was also on the verge of madness, these lines: ‘I have appointed a meeting day of monarchs in Rome. I shall order . . . to be shot.’

And he signed himself *Nietzsche Cæsar*.

CHAPTER XI
INDIVIDUALISM VERSUS EGOTISM

XI

INDIVIDUALISM VERSUS EGOTISM

I

IN studying the development of Nietzsche's inner tragedy to its *dénouement* we are continually reminded that his method of self-conquest, as he calls it, is not a synthetic unification of the personality, but the suppression of certain instincts and qualities on behalf of others. In spite of his campaign against asceticism, for instance, he borrowed most of his weapons from the ascetics, only he used them in a different direction. Prompted by his biological view on the one side, and by the self-absorption of a sufferer on the other, he naturally measured everything from the standpoint of his own needs, of his own will to health and power. However, in reducing all manifestations of life to open or disguised Will to Power, Nietzsche was sometimes inclined to confuse various, even incompatible, planes of this Will. The most frequent

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

mistake on his part is the identification of egoism with individualism, for instance.

We are no longer naïve or hypocritical enough to pretend that our 'altruism' is an absolute opposite of our egoism; but we should be equally one-sided in proclaiming them entirely identical. For although they are of the same origin, the one may be a complete sublimation of the other. This sublimation is natural and necessary as long as it goes in the direction of growth or expansion of our Ego. The latter may even attain in the course of its growth to such limits as to embrace the whole of Humanity and look with an ironical smile at the narrow 'biological' point of its own departure. An altruism of this kind is, of course, not selfless, but rather the highest manifestation of our self. It also implies the greatest amount of inward richness, full-blooded warmth, and strength; while the so-called self-less 'altruism' may often prove, on a closer inquiry, to be the meanest kind of veiled egoism, whose cold, offensive philanthropy is either a form of investment 'beyond,' or self-complacent wallowing in one's own spiritual and moral conceit.

At a certain stage of development, a strong and vital self invariably breaks the fetters of a

Individualism versus Egotism

biological mentality, to postulate a broader, a 'religious' plane—not as a rest-house or subterfuge, but as a condition for its further expansion.

The opposite direction, which narrows everything down—for the sake of the maintenance and glorification of one's biological Ego—we should call the egotistic (as distinct from the individualistic) self-assertiveness.

II

These two elements have the same source in our Ego and they exist in various proportions in all of us. In certain people they are indiscriminately intermixed or even amalgamated. Nietzsche himself was in danger of confusing them as soon as he proclaimed the 'spiritual' man but an appendage to the 'biological' man. It is on the biological ground that the selfness of the superman and the selfishness of the subman are and must become confused, since, on this plane, there is no proper dividing line between the two. Therefore, no one can be surprised at Nietzsche's occasional extolling of the zoological kind of egoism at the expense of its opposite.

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

'At the risk of displeasing innocent ears, I submit that egoism belongs to the essence of a noble soul, I mean the unalterable belief that to a being such as "we," other beings must naturally be in subjection, and have to sacrifice themselves. The noble soul accepts the fact of his egoism without question, and also without consciousness of harshness, constraint, or arbitrariness therein, but rather as something that may have its basis in the primary law of things: if he sought a designation for it he would say: "It is justice itself."'

Nietzsche's morality of rearing requires a richness of contrasts, and therefore a parallel development of good and evil qualities. As is known, he makes a subtle difference between the bad and the evil qualities, seeing the roots of the former in weakness, and those of the latter in strength. Consequently, from his standpoint only the bad (*shlecht*), and not the evil (*böse*) individual, can be called immoral. But this distinction may lead again to rather puzzling dilemmas—in practice. How shall we make the difference between an 'evil' murderer, for instance, and a 'bad' murderer? Where is, in fact, the exact boundary between 'bad' and 'evil'? Between strength and weakness? Or between 'evil' and 'good'?

Individualism versus Egotism

Moreover, if the last two qualities be considered as equally moral, they are even bound to become in the long run also identical. Nietzsche, in fact, identifies them on several occasions in the same way as he mixes up individualism and egoism. A subtilisation of so-called 'evil' qualities becomes for him even a symptom of highest culture.

'Let us halt for a moment before this symptom of *highest culture*—I call it the *pessimism of strength*,' he exclaims in *The Will to Power*. 'Man no longer requires a "justification of evil"; justification is precisely what he abhors: he enjoys evil, *pur*, *cru*; he regards purposeless evil as the most interesting kind of evil. If he had required a God in the past, he now delights in cosmic disorder without a God, a world of accident, to the essence of which terror, ambiguity and seductiveness belong. In a state of this sort, it is precisely *goodness* which requires to be justified—that is to say, it must either have an evil and dangerous basis, or else it must contain a vast amount of stupidity; in which case it still pleases. Animality no longer awakens terror now; a very intellectual and happy wanton spirit in favour of the animal in man is, in such periods, the most triumphant form of spirituality. Man is now strong enough

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

to be able to feel ashamed of a *belief in God*: he may now play the part of the devil's advocate afresh. If in practice he pretends to uphold virtue, it will be for those reasons which lead virtue to be associated with subtlety, cunning, lust of gain, and a form of lust of power.'

III

So far so good. But even if Nietzsche does not mean it quite literally we are still entitled to ask: What can prevent in such a case a strong and ruthless subman (or a real 'beast of prey') from considering himself the only determiner of values—in his own name? If the quantum of the biological power and vitality is the only standard of valuation, then in the long run everything will be decided by the fist, *i.e.*, by brutal selfishness.

Nietzsche's biological self-glorification may lead, in short, not only to the confusion of different planes and values, but also to a complete moral solipsism of the individual, and consequently, to moral nihilism. As long as morality is based on absolute self-will, every one is entitled to take the standpoint from which he can best proclaim his own 'super-human' Ego

Individualism versus Egotism

as of more importance than the whole of mankind. The biological conception of superman may eventually narrow even the noblest individual to such an extent as to make him scornfully look upon mankind as a kind of manure—for *the* Superman *Nietzsche-Cæsar*, i.e., for his own egoistic self.

On the other hand, this very exaggerated subjectivism which was the apotheosis of Nietzsche's utter uprootedness, found a permanent counterpoise in his already mentioned tendency towards universality, and especially in his Dionysian impulse towards individual expansion. So much so that in *Beyond Good and Evil* he himself suddenly exclaims: 'Who has not been sick to death of all subjectivity and its confounded ipsissimosity!'

Hence, without touching upon further aspects of Nietzsche's egotism, we may return to the reverse side of his personality—to those spasmodic states of his consciousness where his Ego endeavours to break its fetters with an almost religious craving to embrace the whole of Humanity. The hyperbolical egotism probably often weighed down Nietzsche's own soul like a heavy burden, for there are few people with a more generous capacity for love—love which he had to suppress, because it was too exacting,

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

too uncompromising and noble. And yet, like a spring of living water it gushed forth at every opportunity, betraying his 'altruistic' double.

Already in the drafts to *The Dawn of Day*, we read a passage such as this: 'All the time I am dominated by the idea that my fate (*meine Geschichte*) is not a merely personal one; that I am doing something for many if I live and develop like this; I always feel as if I were a multitude (*Mehrheit*) which I myself am addressing in a confidential, earnest, comforting way.' Or take these few lines in which one can feel clearly the religious, the mystical strain in Nietzsche's individualism: 'The first question is by no means whether we are satisfied by ourselves: but whether we are satisfied with anything at all. Granting that we should say yea to any single moment, we have then affirmed not only ourselves, but the whole of existence. For nothing stands by itself, either in us or in the other things: and if our soul has vibrated and rung with happiness, like a chord, once only and only once, then all eternity was necessary in order to bring about that one event—and all eternity, in this single moment of our affirmation, was called good, was saved, justified, and blessed.'

Individualism versus Egotism

In *The Will to Power* Nietzsche gives yet another definition of the Noble Man widely different from that somewhat zoological type of nobility which one traces in his previous two characteristics. He endows him with 'real goodness, nobility, greatness of soul, as the result of vital wealth: which does not give in order to receive—and which has no desire to *elevate* itself by being good; *squandering* is typical of genuine goodness; vital *personal* wealth is its prerequisite.'

And so, in spite of his frequent mixing of selfness with selfishness, Nietzsche several times points out the wide difference between them—most particularly in Zarathustra's sermon, called *The Bestowing Virtue*.

'Uncommon is the highest virtue, and unprofiting, beaming is it, and soft of lustre; a bestowing virtue is the highest virtue.

'Verily, I divine you well, my disciples: ye strive like me for bestowing virtue. What should ye have in common with cats and wolves?

'It is your thirst to become sacrifices and gifts yourselves: and therefore have ye the thirst to accumulate all riches in your soul.

'Insatiably striveth your soul for treasures and jewels, because your virtue is insatiable in desiring to bestow.

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

‘Ye constrain all things to flow towards you and into you, so that they shall flow back again out of your fountain as the gifts of your love.

‘Verily, an appropriator of all values must such bestowing love become; but healthy and holy call I this selfishness.’

And this is how he describes the ‘other’ selfishness—that of the grabbing egotists:

‘Another selfishness is there, an all-too-poor and hungry kind, which would always steal—the selfishness of the sick, the sickly selfishness.

‘With the eye of the thief it looketh upon all that is lustrous; with the craving of hunger it measureth him who has abundance; and ever does it prowl round the tables of bestowers.

‘Sickness speaketh in such craving, and invisible degeneration; of a sickly body, speaketh the larcenous craving of this selfishness.

‘Tell me, my brother, what do we think bad, and worst of all? Is it not degeneration? And we always suspect degeneration when the bestowing soul is lacking.

‘Upwards goeth our course from genera on to super genera. But a horror to us is the degenerating sense, which saith: “All for myself”!’

And so, after all, this ‘holy’ selfishness of Nietzsche is less egoistic than the self-denial

Individualism versus Egotism

of many a philanthropist. And more religious, even more truly Christian. Nietzsche, this outspoken antipodes of Christ, now and then seems to be so near Christ that he almost touches Him.

He was in fact able to go as far as the Dionysian plane on which our Ego bursts in its impulse towards union with all Creation and all Life. But for reasons which we have already indicated he was unable to proceed further: whenever he was in the height, his intellectual conscience, as well as his own biological double, drew him down again, in spite of his religious instinct and temperament.

Consequently, while he persisted in his 'Promethean' defiance, his heroic superman came to an impasse from which he could be saved only apparently—by the *tour-de-force* of a new pragmatic illusion.

CHAPTER XII
ZARATHUSTRA'S IMPASSE

XII

ZARATHUSTRA'S IMPASSE

I

WE saw how Nietzsche's strong religious instinct, consciously driven by his will from its appropriate dimension upon a more limited plane, indulged in various substitutes, trying to conquer a new faith in Life. At last he went so far as to smuggle into his biological *Weltanschauung* even a kind of modified 'eternal life.' The subliminal impulse towards a self-assertion in the face of eternity itself—an impulse which is characteristic of all profoundly religious natures—found a disguised and 'scientific' outlet in Nietzsche's hypothesis of Eternal Recurrence, the first flash of which he had in the beginning of August, 1881, at Silvaplana (near Sils-Maria) in the Engadin. But apart from such more or less unconscious reasons, it was largely the heroic wrestle with his own pessimism that eventually brought Nietzsche face to face with this idea.

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

The ultimate bravery of human will would consist, as a matter of fact, not in withstanding our life in spite of all its pain, but in not shrinking from it even if this very existence should return any amount of times through all eternity. The affirmation of life and the courage with regard to it, especially on the part of an invalid, could not go further; for there is nothing to challenge the strength and the power of endurance of a sufferer to such an extent as the idea of Eternal Recurrence. This affirmation of life would be at the same time the highest self-affirmation in a world which in itself is without any sense or meaning. A musing of this kind we find, in truth, already in an aphorism ('The Heaviest Burden') in Nietzsche's *Joyful Wisdom*.

'What if a demon crept after thee into thy loneliest loneliness some day or night, and said to thee: "This life, as thou livest it at present, and hast lived it, thou must live it once more, and also innumerable times; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and every sigh, and all the unspeakably small and great in thy life must come to thee again, and all in the same series and sequence—and similarly this spider and this moonlight among the trees, and similarly this moment, and I myself. The eternal sandglass

Zarathustra's Impasse

of existence will ever be turned once more, and thou with it, thou speck of dust!—Wouldst thou not throw thyself down and gnash thy teeth, and curse the demon that so spake? Or hast thou once experienced a tremendous moment in which thou wouldst answer him: “Thou art a God, and never did I hear aught more divine!” If that thought acquired power over thee, as thou art, it would transform thee; and perhaps crush thee; the question with regard to all and everything: “Dost thou want this once more, and also for innumerable times?” would lie as the heaviest burden upon thy activity! Or, how wouldst thou have to become favourably inclined to thyself and to life, so as *to long for nothing more ardently* than for this last eternal sanctioning and sealing?’

II

When Nietzsche, during his struggle, arrived at this dilemma, he certainly would endeavour to overcome its burden in such a way as to remain ‘favourably inclined’ to himself. In other terms, he accepted this possibility; more—he accepted it not as a mere hypothesis but almost as a dogma, to which he gave a

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

leading rôle in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* and which he tried to develop later on, especially in his drafts to *The Will to Power*.

Nietzsche took up this hypothesis with all the greater eagerness because of its quasi-scientific character. According to him our Universe possesses a definite quantity of energy and therefore a definite number of centres of energy; whence follows that 'the universe must go through a calculable number of combinations in the great game of chance which constitutes its existence. In infinity, at some moment or other, every possible combination must once have been realised; not only this, but it must have been realised an infinite number of times. And inasmuch as between every one of these combinations and its next recurrence every other possible combination would necessarily have been undergone, and since every one of these combinations would determine the whole series in the same order, a circular movement of absolutely identical series is thus demonstrated: the universe is thus shown to be a circular movement which has already repeated itself an infinite number of times, and which plays its game for all eternity.'

It is not within our present scope to investigate the scientific value of this theory, or to point

Zarathustra's Impasse

out those Europeans—from Pythagoras to Gustave Le Bon—who had devised analogous hypotheses. Our sole concern for the moment is Nietzsche's genuine attempt at a kind of scientific metaphysics. He thought in fact he could prove even scientifically that all things eternally return, and ourselves also; that we have already existed, and shall exist again, times without number, in exactly the same conditions as now.

'I come again,' says Zarathustra, 'with this sun, with this earth, with this eagle, with this serpent—not to a new life, or a better life, or a similar life: I come again eternally to this identical and self-same life in its greatest and its smallest, to teach again the eternal return of all things—to speak again the word of the great noontide of earth and man, to announce again to man the Superman.'

In abolishing God, Nietzsche affirmed life despite its senselessness. With the Eternal Recurrence he tried to affirm it even if this senselessness should be repeated an endless number of times, through all eternity. But it was here that he came into a tight corner.

At a first and superficial glance the idea of the Eternal Recurrence seems to imply the rule: 'Live in such a way that your life should be

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

worth living in exactly the same form again and again!' The certainty of such a recurrence would be morally much more compelling than any abstract categorical imperatives—as long as the arrangement of our lives depends on our own will. But what are we to do in case our will is also but an eternally predetermined part of the monotonous cosmic Mechanism? And this precisely is the logical conclusion at which Nietzsche must and does arrive.

If all is bound to come back exactly as it was, an endless number of times, in its minutest details, then our smallest actions have been already repeated in innumerable cycles of return, and whatever we do or think is but a reproduction from a *cliché* that has been fixed and predetermined for each of us for ever and ever. Our 'creative' Will to Power then sounds like the bitterest irony. To repeat the words of Ibsen's Maximus, we will because we have to will; we are but senseless marionettes of a blind and senseless Machine.

The titanic Superman himself becomes a titanic mockery, for his proud will is an illusion. He, too, is like a gramophone record, eternally repeating the same melody dictated by the implacable Machine: whether he acknowledges it or not—he is its miserable tool and puppet.

Zarathustra's Impasse

III

It is impossible to propound a more disheartening *Weltanschauung*, and no 'innocence of Becoming which gives us the highest courage and the highest freedom' will save Zarathustra from bankruptcy.

However, it is exactly this most 'atrocious aspect of existence' which Nietzsche now wishes to challenge in order to prove to himself his ultimate courage and strength. Once he has conjured up this 'truth' (whose reality is quite possible and therefore has to be reckoned with) he must not retreat. Therefore he will not shrink from the laming conclusions involved by his own dogma. The mere terror of it must have seemed seductive to a man, especially to an invalid, who measured the individual power by the amount of physical and spiritual endurance. In facing the possibility of the predetermined mechanical recurrence, he raised his own endurance upon an incredible level, arriving at that line beyond which our human consciousness (in this direction at least) cannot go.

'Suddenly the terrible chamber of truth is opened,' Nietzsche writes in one of his drafts.

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

‘An unconscious self-protectiveness, caution, ambush, defence, keeps us from the gravest knowledge. Thus have I lived heretofore. I suppress something; but the restless babbling and rolling down of stones has rendered my instinct over-powerful. Now I am rolling my last stone, the most appalling truth stands close to my hand.

‘Truth has been exorcised out of its grave—we created it, we waked it: the highest expression of courage and of the feeling of power. Scorn of all pessimism that has existed hitherto!

‘We fight for it—we find out that our only means of enduring it is to create a creature who is able to endure it: unless, of course, we voluntarily dazzle ourselves afresh and blind ourselves in regard to it. But this we are no longer able to do!

‘We it was who created the gravest thought—let us now create a being unto whom it will be not only light but blessed.’

Hence one more reason for creating the Superman. The rest, the weak and superfluous ones, will be not strong enough to stand the horror of the idea and will perish through it—unless the whole of humanity be first reared and made ripe for it. ‘I wish to teach the thought which gives unto many the right to cancel their

Zarathustra's Impasse

existence—the great disciplinary thought,’ as he puts it. And again, ‘It is the most *oppressive* thought. . . . The means of *enduring* it: the transvaluation of all values.’

But how is *he* to transvalue? How is he to reconcile with the rigid determinism the impetus of his own creative will which wishes to mould the whole of humanity and press the hand ‘upon milleniums as upon wax’? If he knows that he is but a predestined tool of a stupid Machine, a helpless wheel in the mechanical cosmic clock-work, then he must not be so naïve as to imagine himself a creator and a transvaluer who sets up new purposes for humanity. And, indeed, to use Nietzsche’s own words, we must assume that in such a case ‘no one gives man his qualities, neither God, society, his parents, his ancestors, nor himself. No one is responsible for the fact that he exists at all, that he is constituted as he is, and that he happens to be in certain circumstances and in a particular environment. The fatality of his being cannot be divorced from the fatality of all that which has been and will be. This is not the result of an individual intention, of a will, of an aim, there is no attempt at attaining to any “ideal man,” or “ideal happiness” or any ideal morality with him—it is absurd to wish

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

him to be careering towards some sort of purpose. *We* invented the concept "purpose"; in reality purpose is altogether lacking. One is necessary, one is a piece of fate, one belongs to the whole, one is in the whole—there is nothing that could judge, measure, compare, and condemn our existence, for that would mean judging, measuring, comparing, and condemning the whole. *But there is nothing outside the whole!*—

IV

It is easy to see that the entire creative *élan* and will to power of the prophetic Zarathustra are thus at stake. Nietzsche's own 'great thought' threatens to undermine the very basis of Nietzscheanism. But he again tries to save himself—by apparently reconciling the irreconcilable elements through his own mental Machiavellism. He tries to escape the impasse by his conception of the *Amor Fati*, whose kernel, in this case, is a complete acceptance of the rigid Necessity—under the veil or illusion of freedom. In short, all *Thou must* on the part of the cosmic clock-work Nietzsche transmutes into: 'I myself willed it so. All that happens does happen only because I will it.'

Zarathustra's Impasse

‘ —As composer, riddle-reader, and redeemer of chance, did I teach them to create the future, and all that *hath been*—to redeem by creating.

‘ The past of man to redeem, and every ‘ It was ’ to transform, until the Will saith: ‘ But so did I will it! So shall I will it—— ’

‘ —This did I call redemption: this alone taught I them to call redemption.’

The *Amor Fati* may be in truth the highest affirmation of life, but only as long as it is a voluntary act of *our own* freedom; denying the latter, we inevitably replace *Amor Fati* by resigned fatalism which we have to accept simply because there is no other course to be taken. Therefore we must not be too much surprised if, after his passionate recipes for the remoulding (by one’s creative will) the whole of Life and Mankind, Nietzsche himself suddenly says: ‘ My formula for greatness in man is *Amor Fati*: the fact that a man wishes nothing to be different either in front of him or behind him, or for all eternity. Not only must the necessity be borne, but it must be loved.’ In short, he confuses *Amor Fati* with the worst kind of pessimistic fatalism.

The contradiction is self-evident, and so is the masked deadlock. The solution is illusory, unconvincing. Nietzsche himself seems to have

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

been conscious of this. In a letter to Rohde (May 23, 1887), in which he speaks of Jacob Burckhard (the famous historian of the Renaissance), Hippolyte Taine, and himself, he makes this avowal: 'As three fundamental nihilists we are irrevocably bound one to another, although, as you may perhaps suspect, I have not yet abandoned all hope of finding a way out of the abyss by means of which we can arrive at "something."'

This he wrote after he had published his main works, in which he had made those transvaluations that he believed were destined to bring the whole earth into convulsions and point out to humanity at last its goal. In essence, he had found nothing. And Nietzsche, with all his pragmatism, was 'psychologically' nearer perhaps an actual void than at the beginning of his philosophic career. No wonder that his late adept, August Strindberg, who for a time was almost more Nietzschean than Nietzsche himself (he signed himself in his last letter to Nietzsche: 'The best, the highest God') soon plunged from the acme of Nietzschean self-glorification straight into the mazes of Christian mysticism *à la* Swedenborg.

Nietzsche, of course, would not 'save' himself by a means like this. Any step in the

Zarathustra's Impasse

direction of a Christian or religious solution would mean for him an acknowledgment of his weakness as well as a refutation of his own gospel. This alone must have been sufficient to enable him to resist all such temptations in this last period, even if he had been aware that an outlet from his impasse would be perhaps possible only upon a plane which necessarily transcends his own philosophy.

Fortunately, he found an emergency exit—in his old ‘metaphysical comfort,’ *i.e.*, in a return to his old Schopenhauerian conception of art.

‘Art and nothing else!’ he exclaims in his posthumous *Will to Power*, while commenting on his first book. ‘Art is the great means of making life possible, the great seducer to life, the great stimulus to life.

‘Art is the only superior counter-agent to all will to the denial of life; it is *par excellence* the anti-Christian, the anti-Buddhistic, the anti-Nihilistic force.

‘Art is the alleviation of the seeker after knowledge—of him who recognises the terrible and questionable character of existence, and who *will* recognise it—of the tragic seeker after knowledge.

‘Art is the alleviation of the man of action—

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

of him who not only sees the terrible and questionable character of existence, but also lives it, will live it—of the tragic and the warlike man, the hero.

‘Art is the alleviation of the sufferer—as the way to states in which pain is willed, is transfigured, is deified, where suffering is a form of great ecstasy.’

So his artifice of self-preservation brought him at the end back to his own starting-point. *The Will to Power* and *The Birth of Tragedy* practically touch each other—in emphasising that ‘art is of more value than truth.’ With this attitude he can eventually barricade himself against any inconvenient truth; and what is more important, it helps him once more to transvalue his own personal suffering into ‘a form of great ecstasy.’

CHAPTER XIII
THE SUPREME TEST

XIII

THE SUPREME TEST

I

EVEN a few excursions into Nietzsche's mentality suffice to prove that he was a complicated conglomeration of various divergent instincts and tendencies which he vainly tried to organise —by the heroic efforts of his will. At the same time, one can see that the decisive factor in his efforts was, on the whole, the passionate desire of an invalid, 'encircled by death,' to justify his own existence from the standpoint of an ascending life.

It was this tendency that made Nietzsche cling so obstinately to the biological plane and continually devise those 'pragmatic' methods which were best adapted to support and foster his self-imposed faith in Life. Of course, while studying this aspect of Nietzscheanism, one may involuntarily arrive at the question whether a life based on a mere biological *Weltanschauung* really is, or is not, the only ascending kind of

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

life. This question is the more justified, because our modern consciousness is already beginning to feel not only the deadlock, but even the biological danger of such a one-sided view. More and more we are beginning to realise that if historical religions have become hostile to the intensity of our earthly life (by transferring the centre of gravity from this world to the world beyond), a religious attitude in its highest 'transvaluation' may, none the less, give the supreme intensity and assertion to this earthly life by the mere fact that it links the Individual to the Whole in such a way as to give his existence that significance, intensity, and power, without which he is bound to become impoverished and to be stranded either in complete indifference, in utter despair, or in *Nietzsche Cæsar*.

Given that our soul or spirit be 'only the name of something in the body,' we cannot dismiss the important fact that this 'something' had rebelled against the body and persisted so long in this revolt (for the sake of its own independence) that it is about two thousand years too late to reconcile them in the name of mere 'biology': the reconciliation will have to take place at least under the condition of equal rights. In man's

The Supreme Test

Unconscious there are perhaps unheard-of latent possibilities by which the orthodox biological plane may be in future superseded—not through ascetic mutilation, but through the fullest and freest natural growth of human individuality as a whole. Therefore, a narrow biological view may be as dangerous to the type of an ascending life as a narrow ‘spiritual’ dogmatism of professional ascetics.

Human evolution is a process from within, and not from without. Why should we then eliminate from this process those ‘inner’ elements, for instance, which have been added to the human consciousness during the last two thousand years? Instead of going back to Paganism, we are forced to go forward to a profounder and more complicated consciousness! But the richer the latter the more it wishes to affirm itself through expansion, until it reaches the limits of the Universe and of Eternity. Such a religious self-affirmation becomes for it a *biological* necessity, so to speak. And if we adopt Nietzsche’s own principle of the relativity of truths; if truth is but that error without which a certain species of living being cannot exist, we are the more entitled to oppose a ‘biological’ view by that religious attitude which promises to us a higher justification

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

and a greater intensity of life than an orthodox biological gospel could ever give us. In the worst case, this would only be a 'vital' error against one less vital.

II

So Nietzsche's own pragmatism may lead to religion, or at any rate to faith. The more so because 'the prerequisite of all living things and of their lives is: that there should be a large amount of faith, that it should be possible to pass definite judgments on things, and that there should be no doubt at all concerning all essential values.'

On the other hand, even such a plausible proposition is no longer sufficient in itself entirely to cope with the processes at work within the modern soul, which seems to be as rapidly disintegrating as the modern culture: in both instances a strong central knot is lacking, wherefore single elements have severed themselves from each other and become 'atomised.'

The attempt to deal with this disintegration by subduing our psychic life to a few recipes

The Supreme Test

of sober and rational logic already seems to us naïve. At the same time a general irrational solution is also impossible; for our independent logic and reason refuse to accept any irrational assumption as unconditionally true—unless the latter produces the certificate of absolute certainty. As this cannot be done, we have to satisfy ourselves with provisional ‘truths’ and, in the best case, take our lives as mere experiments.

Our pragmatic transvaluations thus hold good and become even indispensable to us up to that ‘psychological’ line at which we realise that they are capable of satisfying only our practical, not our ultimate vital needs and cravings. It is here that our irrational or spiritual conscience may turn against our own intellectual conscience. And since there has not been found a proper ground on which their divergent truths could be reconciled, even a resolute ‘will to believe’ will hardly save us from finishing where we have started. So we revolve anew in our vicious circle between various scientific, æsthetic, metaphysical, and other illusions, becoming more and more aware that all of them are equally uncertain and that on the present plane of our consciousness all the possibilities of a real solution have been already exhausted.

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

On the one hand, we feel the necessity of a *new plane* of consciousness; and on the other, our own scepticism is the first obstacle on our way to the possibility and validity of such a plane; for, being honest towards ourselves, we see the relativity of all—of knowledge, of truths, of morals, of beliefs, even the relativity of time and space. It is true that, realising also the relativity of our own relativity, and being now and then sceptical even with regard to our own scepticism, we feel at times as if we were on the verge of something new—on the eve of a general awakening and resurrection of all those living dead who by some mistake are called humanity. But even if the possibility of such a change exist the modern individual will first have to pay for it: he will have to pass through that spiritual ‘no-man’s land’ where his own scepticism may ultimately strip him of everything—of God, of truth, of faith, of duty, of morals—in order to make him stand the severest, the supreme test. For it is here that he will be obliged to solve the question as to whether his inward cataclysm is still capable of giving birth to a new Adam upon a new plane of *creative* Religion (which alone can produce a new Culture), or whether our highest human aspirations will be driven back into the old swamp of

The Supreme Test

materialistic civilisation and degrading self-complacency of the imperturbed 'last man' who is just now in ascendancy all over the world.

'“What is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is star?”—so asketh the last man and blinketh.

'The earth has then become small, and on it there hoppeth the last man who maketh everything small. His species is ineradicable like that of the groundflea; the last man liveth longest.

'“We have discovered happiness”—say the last men, and blink thereby.'

III

Among other reasons, it was the horror before these 'last men,' towards whom our civilisation is more and more tending, that made Nietzsche so defiantly challenge our modernity and dash so impetuously from it towards new forms of human existence. He fought as a brave warrior; but, strange to say, it was partly his own obstinate courage that prevented his reaching that new plane of human consciousness

Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness

which perhaps may be attained by the man to come.

Nietzsche, with his deep religious vein, and a boundless capacity for reverence and love, was unconsciously pushed towards that plane. There were even moments when—approaching it through its opposite—he came very near ; but owing to his self-division he was unable to take the last decisive step. When the ultimate and most difficult self-conquest lay before him ; when his cherished conviction of super-human and self-centred power had to be overcome, his own Promethean instinct made him persevere in his defiance. Besides, as he could not find outside himself any aspect of life worth loving (*'tout comprendre c'est tout mépriser'*), he was obliged to take refuge in himself and seek within himself alone those elements on which he could bestow his innate admiration and reverence.

And so the tension between Nietzsche's will and Nietzsche's weakness, between his tendencies and his instincts, between his Conscious and his Unconscious, became too strong for him. Since he had not found a real resultant he lived eventually in extremes: now in the highest pitch of Dionysian ecstasies, a little later in the depths of dejection and despondency ; and the greater

The Supreme Test

the distance between these extremes the more imminent was the danger for his already shattered mind and body.

At last the inevitable happened. He was doomed to 'perish beneath a load that one can neither bear nor throw off'—on January 1st, 1889, he finally lost his reason.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
ASTOR LENOX
TILDEN FOUNDATION
NEW YORK

GLASGOW: W. COLLINS SONS AND CO LTD.

THE GLASGOW FREE PRESS AND
CITY ADVERTISER

FRIDAY, 11th JANUARY 1901

PRICE 10d

Some New Publications

from MESSRS COLLINS' LIST

Published from their London Offices, 48 PALL MALL, S.W.

NOTE.—*Messrs Collins will always be pleased to send lists of their forthcoming books to any one who will send name and address.*

Old England

BERNARD GILBERT

Royal 8vo, Cloth, 20/- net

A God's-Eye view of a village. This book is unique in English literature both in conception and treatment. The author presents a whole community to the reader, taking for his subject our largest social unit—an English village—where everybody knows everything about every one. He has taken a typical village during one day of the war and given a camera obscura presentment of the multitudinous intrigues, ambitions, desires, disputes, relationships, and interests which thread its fabric so closely. There is no hero or heroine, for the author presents some hundreds of characters, each all important to himself. These speak their own thoughts, throw startling sidelights on their neighbours; and from the whole, a picture of a village community takes definite shape. The author has snapped his village at one instant on one day, so that there is no 'action.' The village is frozen motionless whilst the reader inspects each inhabitant. There is no sentimentalism, no 'kailyard' gloss; the villagers expressing themselves with immense force from the Earl to the mole-catcher. Mr Gilbert has done intensely for the English countryside what Balzac did for his nation on a great scale. Not only is each of the great array of characters set forth vividly, but the larger problems of the countryside are illuminated from various angles. A map of the village shows every cottage, some fifty genealogical trees explain the relationships of the villagers, and a 'Who's Who' gives full information about each inhabitant. The author has taken three years to write this book, and it is the fruit of a life-time's close observation. All who were born in the country or have any interest in rural life and problems must be interested in *Old England*.

The Carpenter and His Kingdom

DR ALEXANDER IRVINE

Crown 8vo, Cloth, 7/6 net

Dr Irvine has already secured a very high place in the affections of the people of this country through his books, *My Lady of the Chimney Corner* and *The Souls of Poor Folk*. *The Carpenter and His Kingdom*, as the name denotes, is a Life of Christ, a re-interpretation of His life as seen by a very simple yet very subtle, very human yet very wise idealist and Christian. No writer on social tendencies after the war has failed to point out the great loss of prestige suffered by the Churches. Speaking broadly, they are regarded with a disinterested tolerance almost amounting to contempt by the great majority of people, and this attitude has as its general effect a marked decrease in 'belief' in Christianity. Dr Irvine's book may prove a very real antidote to that progressive agnosticism, for he still believes that the Life of Christ is the greatest example mankind has ever been given, and that the influence of His message is vastly greater than that of any other single influence in history. But to show that he has to draw a new picture of Christ emphasising His Humanity as well as His Divinity, and make His teaching intelligible to a Society still hardly approaching convalescence after a prolonged and virulent disease. It is an original, beautiful, and timely book.

A London Mosaic

W. L. GEORGE

Small Crown 4to, Cloth 15/- net.

Illustrations by P. Forbes-Robertson

A series of brilliant satirical sketches of London places and London people by one of the most popular novelists of the day. Mr George is always interesting and his point of view original and challenging. He knows London intimately and loves her well, but his affection does not blunt his critical sense.

To go with him to the Café Royal and listen as he points out and discusses the great ones sitting therein; to follow him on his pilgrimage 'In Search of Vice'; to accompany him to theatre or music hall, are most amusing and instructive experiences which no lover of London should miss. Mr Philippe Forbes-Robertson's illustrations perfectly interpret the mood of the book.

South with Scott

CAPT. E. R. G. R. EVANS

C.B., D.S.O., R.N.

Demy 8vo, Cloth, 10/6 net

With photogravure portrait of Captain Evans

Captain Evans was second in command of the British Antarctic expedition commanded by Captain Scott, and took over Captain Scott's position as leader after his death. It will be remembered that, during the war, Captain Evans was in command of H.M.S. *Broke*, which, together with H.M.S. *Swift*, engaged six German destroyers, sinking two and torpedoing a third. It is an interesting, intimate, racy, and absorbing account of the expedition compressed into a comparatively small compass, and fully brings out the intense difficulties the expedition had to face, the heroism displayed by every member of the party, and the magnificent scientific results obtained.

Labour : The Giant with the Feet of Clay

SHAW DESMOND

Demy 8vo, Cloth, 10/6 net

Mr Shaw Desmond is very well known as a versatile writer and as a great champion of the Labour Cause. His book, therefore, is of singular interest at the present time. It is a critical and sympathetic analysis of the Labour Movement from the inside, by a man who, after being a member of the Labour Party for fourteen years, is frankly disillusioned. In what amounts to a sweeping but reasoned indictment, the writer shows the 'feet of clay' of the Labour Movement, and claims that though outwardly united the movement is split from crown to heel by fundamentally opposed ideals, tactics, and objectives, that it might collapse at any moment, and that such 'success' as has been obtained has been purchased at the price of principle. In so doing he gives many vivid and revealing portraits of great Labour figures of the last generation, from Keir Hardie to Rosa Luxemburg, 'the Red Tigress.' The book is not merely destructive, the latter portion is given over to a constructive examination of the problems facing democracy with a very interesting foreshadowing of what the writer calls 'The New Democracy' or 'The Spiritual Democracy.' He shows not only how Labour may set its house in order but how the House of Society itself may be saved from that 'unrest' which is slowly destroying it. Mr Desmond's writing is at once stimulating and suggestive, instructive and illuminating, and will certainly be widely discussed.

The Island of Youth

EDWARD SHANKS

Author of *The Queen of China*, *The People of the Ruins*, etc.

Small Crown 8vo, Cloth, 5/- net

The Island of Youth is the fourth volume of verse by a poet whose powers have been steadily maturing. Two years ago Mr Shanks's *The Queen of China* won the Hawthornden Prize, and the present volume contains all the poems he has since written. It contains one long poem, a beautiful idyll in blank verse, and a number of short poems. Mr Shanks's language is refreshingly pure and his rhythm refreshingly musical, in an age which has made many attempts to glorify gibberish and raucous discord. He is, as all good poets must be, at once original and in the stream of national tradition, and in no respect more traditional than in his affection for and knowledge of the English landscape which has breathed its fragrance into so much of our great poetry in all ages. Those who know his previous books, or the selections from them in *Georgian Poetry*, do not need to be told this, and those unacquainted with Mr Shanks's previous work can be most emphatically assured that they will not be disappointed in *The Island of Youth*. It is one of those books familiarity with which breeds an ever deepening admiration and love.

Ibsen and His Creation

JANKO LAVRIN

Crown 8vo, Cloth, 7/6 net

This is a further contribution to 'psycho-criticism' by Mr Janko Lavrin, whose able study of Dostoevsky was so favourably received. His aim is to present a new and original solution of the central problem of Ibsen, and to show how Ibsen's individual psychological conflict is worked out in his plays.

Mr Lavrin reveals in a new light the great significance of Ibsen as a representative of modern consciousness, and in so doing illuminates not only Ibsen's dilemma but also our own.

Last Studies in Criminology H. B. IRVING

Demy 8vo, Cloth, 15/- net.

With photogravure portrait of H. B. Irving

With the death of H. B. Irving one of the most remarkable figures of the English stage disappeared, for not only was he an actor of great merit, but a man of very versatile mental attainments. His bent was always towards criminological study, and his various studies in crime and criminals are familiar to many readers. These, the last of his essays, will be read with great attention. They are mainly studies of persons accused but not convicted of crime, men such as Adolph Beck; and the element of uncertainty that attaches to so many of these cases gives them an added point of interest for so subtle and penetrating a mind as that of the late Mr H. B. Irving.

From Waterloo to the Marne

COUNT PIETRO ORSI

Small Crown 4to, Cloth, 15/- net

This is a book which should be read by all those who wish to arrive at an accurate knowledge of the causes and condition which led up to and provoked the Great World War of 1914-1918, and are responsible for the world unrest of to-day. The author, the well-known Italian Professor of International History, describes in this book, clearly and logically, the rise, the ebb and flow of the international democratic spirit which floods the world of to-day. He shows the nexus which unites all races and nations of the world into one coherent whole, and traces with admirable clarity the birth, life, and struggles of that desire for popular liberty which first penetrated into every corner of Europe with the armies of the great Napoleon. It is a compendium of the history of each country of the world, and should be read by each student who not only wishes to familiarise himself with the history of the last century of his own country, but desires also to gain a solid acquaintance of that of the remaining countries of the globe. The arrangement of the book is excellent and original; the libraries of every nation have been ransacked for its compilation, and the work, without being in the least degree scrappy, gives all the salient points of universal history. This historical encyclopedia should be in the hands of every thinking man.

The Riddle of the Rhine

VICTOR LEFEBURE

Demy 8vo, 10/6 net

This book establishes beyond any shadow of doubt the importance of chemical warfare in the recent war and its supreme significance for the future. It shows, in addition, the intimate connection between the new war method and chemical, scientific, and industrial development. What chemical steps must be taken for national safety in an armed or disarmed world? What international disarmament measures can be taken in this field? It proves beyond refutation that if the second question remains unanswered all other disarmament measures are farcical. These general questions, although of enormous importance, were, however, all introduced by the menace and critical war activities of the German organic chemical or dye combine. This menace still exists, and can only be removed by a redistribution of the organic chemical forces of the world.

A History of English Furniture

PERCY MACQUOID, R.I.

With plates in colour after Shirley Slocombe, and numerous illustrations selected and arranged by the author; in four volumes :

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| I.—THE AGE OF OAK | III.—THE AGE OF MAHOGANY |
| II.—THE AGE OF WALNUT | IV.—THE AGE OF SATINWOOD |

£21 net per set, or £5 5s. net per volume.

Size, 15 in. 11 in.; bound in red buckram, gilt.

With a new index.

The subject has been divided into four periods, the first dating from 1500 to 1660, comprising furniture that can be attributed to the Renaissance, and its evolution from the Gothic. The second from 1660 to 1720, when the change is varied by the Restoration and Dutch influence, followed by a distinctly assertive English spirit. The third period covers the introduction from France of fresh ideas in design, clearly marking another change, lasting from 1720 to 1770. The fourth, 1770-1820, which was inspired by an affectation for all things classical. While the book only purports to deal with English furniture, it is obvious that reference is freely made to foreign styles in order to keep the matter in perspective.

Illustrated Prospectus will be sent on application.

Lavrin, J.

92

N5582

92

N5582

